English Translation of the Holy Quran

With Explanatory Notes

Originally by

Maulana Muhammad Ali

Edited by

Zahid Aziz

Language updated, notes abridged

Second Edition

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ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF

THE HOLY QURAN

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES

English Translation of The Holy Quran

With Explanatory Notes

From the English translation and commentary of

Maulana Muhammad Ali

Renowned author of several works on Islam

Language updated and notes abridged
by the Editor
Zahid Aziz

Second Edition

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without Arabic text and with shorter notes were published in:
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Preface

The English translation of the Holy Quran with extensive explanatory footnotes, by Maulana Muhammad Ali (d. 1951), was first published in 1917. It was the first English translation and commentary by a Muslim to be generally available in the world and to be published in the West.[1] The 1917 and several subsequent editions were printed in England and distributed from the Muslim mission at the Woking Mosque in Surrey, England. This work remained the only generally-known Muslim English translation for several years. It was widely acclaimed as being an accurate, faithful, and true rendering — one which was desperately needed. It influenced all the major later English translations.

Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation was not merely an academic or literary exercise. Its objectives were to refute the vast mass of misrepresentations of Islam by its Western critics, to convey the faith-reviving and heart-inspiring light of Islam to the world, to show how Islamic teachings are applicable to solving the problems of modern times, and to teach and guide both the Western-educated Muslims and English-speaking new converts to Islam. Towards the end of his life, Maulana Muhammad Ali thoroughly revised his translation and commentary, and this revised edition was first published in 1951. As he writes in the Preface, he made the translation simpler and brought the commentary up to date with the changed circumstances prevailing after the Second World War.

The language of his translation was solemn and dignified, as befits a Divine scripture, yet it was also plain and easy to understand, aimed at the level of an educated reader having a reasonable standard of English. However, due to changes in the usage and teaching of English in subsequent years, such a reader today is

1. There were three, slightly earlier, English translations by Muslims in India in the early 1900s, but these were of very limited circulation, and little known.

much less familiar with certain forms and styles of literary expression used in the translation than was the case with previous generations. To bring the language closer to the general readership, it became necessary to replace some expressions by more modern forms. This has been my aim in producing the present updated version of the translation, while showing reverence to the original work and remaining as close as possible to the language used by Maulana Muhammad Ali.

The factor of greatest assistance during this editing work has been that the Maulana has himself in some places used more modern terms and in other places older styles to translate the same original words. Utilising this, I have been able to select his own phraseology to replace the older expressions. Thus, in the work of updating the translation in various places, I have simply applied the wording used by him elsewhere if such could be suitably found.

The most noticeable change I have made from the Maulana's last, 1951, edition is the replacement of the second person singular forms, 'thou', 'thee', 'thy', etc., by 'you' and 'your'. In fact, in the Preface to his first edition published in 1917, the Maulana wrote: "I have, however, given up the antiquated *thou* (except when the Divine Being is addressed)." For details of this and other changes of language, please see the Appendix to this book (p. 791).

In clarification of certain points, I have consulted both the 1917 edition of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English translation of the Quran as well as his Urdu translation of the Quran with extensive commentary known as *Bayan-ul-Quran.* I would also mention that in case of some verses I have compared other English translations of the Quran, old and new, to form a judgment as to the most suitable level of language.

Maulana Muhammad Ali produced his translation to the highest standard of literary scholarship and he used words, expressions, phrases and styles that reflect the original Arabic with great precision, perhaps unmatched by any other English translation. In my effort to update its language, and bring it closer to current usage, it was inevitable that in some places its high literary level would suffer and the new expressions employed be somewhat less precise than those which they replace.

Maulana Muhammad Ali had also produced two editions of his translation without including the Arabic text and with much

condensed footnotes, in order to make available a handier book for the general reader. Following the same approach in the present work, the Arabic text has not been included, and the footnote content has been abridged, although not nearly by the extent of reduction in the Maulana's two editions. Taking the footnotes from his revised 1951 edition (as also found in its subsequent reprints), I have eliminated the detailed lexical discussion of the range of meaning of words and the explanation of the variety of views about the interpretation of the text. Only the conclusion reached by the Maulana as to the explanation of the verses is retained. Occasionally the abridgment has required some insignificant re-phrasing of his original words.

Those who wish to benefit from the Maulana's full, scholarly commentary may consult the current reprints of his 1951 edition.

At certain points in the footnotes it was necessary to make some further comment on a text, due mainly to issues and questions that have arisen in recent years. To meet this need I have added my own comments, marked as *Editor's Note*. These occur within existing footnotes and also as additional footnotes. In three places (21:85, 33:72, 55:33), footnotes have been added based on suggestions made by the late Mr N.A. Faruqui, a leading figure of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore who was much involved in the Quran translation and publication work of this movement. He had sent me a brief draft of that material long ago.

The introductory notes at the head of the chapters have had to be abridged considerably and therefore they have been re-worded.

As in the two editions produced by the Maulana which do not include the Arabic text, I have laid out the translation in continuous running form, not starting each verse on a new line. However, for ease of reading as well as comprehension I have divided most sections further into paragraphs. Note that the division of the longer chapters of the Quran into sections is only found in certain parts of the Muslim world, such as the Indian subcontinent. The headings given to sections is a feature of our English translations; these are not in the Arabic text of the Quran.

An edition, with the translation language updated and footnotes abridged as described above, was first published in 2010. The present edition is essentially a reprint of the same work, now being published in 2025, with corrections of any errors found, and minor

changes and improvements. Here I must acknowledge my friend Nadara Khan of Trinidad for meticulously reading through the previous edition and making numerous suggestions relating to consistency, style and improvement.

To reduce the volume of this edition, the introduction has been curtailed by removing the sections covering the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the teachings of the Quran on certain points, leaving only the section describing the structure of the Quran. Certain information about my revision work has been moved from the Preface to an Appendix. The print page size has also been increased to conform to a standard size.

The responsibility for all aspects of this revision rests with me, and I crave forgiveness from Allah as well as from the readers of this edition for any flaws in this production.

Zahid Aziz
June 2025

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1	2:1	3	16	18:75	336
2	2:142	28	17	21:1	364
3	2:253	56	18	23:1	387
4	3:92	80	19	25:21	411
5	4:24	101	20	27:60	434
6	4:148	120	21	29:45	454
7	5:83	142	22	33:31	478
8	6:111	164	23	36:22	503
9	7:88	185	24	39:32	527
10	8:41	204	25	41:47	546
11	9:94	226	26	46:1	570
12	11:6	246	27	51:31	594
13	12:53	265	28	58:1	623
14	15:2	287	29	67:1	650
15	17:1	310	30	78:1	687

Introduction

The name *Al-Qur'ān*, the proper name of the Sacred Book of the Muslims, occurs several times in the Book itself (2:185, etc.). The word *Qur'ān* is an infinitive noun from the root *qara'a,* meaning *he read* or *recited*; and the Book is so called because it is or should be read; as a matter of fact, it is *the most widely read book* in the whole world. It is plainly stated to be a revelation from the Lord of the worlds (26:192), or a revelation from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise (39:1, etc.), and so on. It was sent down to the Prophet Muhammad (47:2), having been revealed to his heart through the Holy Spirit (26:193–194), in the Arabic language (26:195, 43:3). The first revelation came to the Holy Prophet in the month of Ramadan (2:185), on the 25th or 27th night, which is known as *Lailat al-Qadr* (97:1).

Divisions

The Holy Quran is divided into 114 chapters, each of which is called a *sūrah*. The word *sūrah* means literally *eminence* or *high degree*, and also *any step of a structure*, and in the Book itself it is applied to a chapter of the Quran (2:23). The chapters of the Holy Quran are of varying length, the largest comprising fully one-twelfth of the entire Book — 286 verses — and the smallest containing only three verses. Each chapter is, however, complete in itself and is, therefore, called a book, and the whole of the Quran is said to contain many books (98:2–3).

Each chapter contains a number of verses, a verse being called an *āyah.* The word *āyah* means, originally, an *apparent sign* or *mark* and, in this sense, it comes to mean *a miracle*, but it also signifies *a communication* or *a message from God,* and is applied as such to a verse of the Holy Quran as well as to a revelation or a law. In certain parts of the Muslim world the longer chapters are marked into sections, each section (known as a *rukū'*) generally dealing with one subject.

For the purposes of recitation, the Holy Quran is divided into 30 parts of equal length, each called a *juz'*, to enable the reciter to complete its recitation in one month. Another division of the Book, traceable to the Prophet himelf, is into seven portions, each known as a *manzil,* to enable the reciter to complete its recitation in seven days. These divisions, however, have nothing to do with the subject-matter of the Quran.

Revealed piecemeal but collected and arranged from the first

The Quran was revealed piecemeal (25:32) during a period of 23 years (609–632 C.E.), the shorter chapters generally, and some of the larger ones, being revealed entire and at one time, while the revelation of the majority of the larger chapters and some of the shorter chapters extended over many years. The practice was that when a chapter was revealed in parts, the Holy Prophet specified, under Divine guidance, the place of the verse revealed, and thus the arrangement of verses in each chapter was entirely his work.

Similarly, later on when a considerable portion had been revealed, the arrangement of the chapters was also the work of the Holy Prophet himself. It is in one of the earliest revelations that the Holy Quran speaks of its collection as well as its revelation as being a part of the Divine scheme: "Surely on Us rests the collecting of it and the reciting of it" (75:17). The collection of the Holy Quran — which means the arrangement of its verses and chapters — was, therefore, a work which was performed by the Holy Prophet himself under Divine guidance, and it is a mistake to think that either Abu Bakr or Uthman was the collector of the Quran, though both of them did important work in connection with the dissemination of the written copies of the sacred text.

Abu Bakr made the first complete written copy, by arranging the manuscripts written in the time of the Holy Prophet, in the order of the oral recitation of the Prophet's time. Uthman's work, on the other hand, was only the ordering of copies to be made from the written manuscript of Abu Bakr's time and the placing of these copies in the various centres of Islamic learning, so that those who wrote the Holy Quran might be able to follow the standard copy. The text of the Holy Quran has thus been safeguarded from all alterations or corruptions in accordance with the Divine promise in one of the earliest revelations: "Surely We have revealed the Reminder, and surely We are its Guardian" (15:9).

Revelations at Makkah and Madinah

Another division of the Holy Book concerns the revelations received at Makkah and those received at Madinah. Of the 23 years over which the revelation of the entire Book is spread, 13 years were passed by the Holy Prophet at Makkah and 10 were passed at Madinah, to which city he had to flee for the safety of his own life and the lives of his followers in the year 622 C.E. Of the entire number of chapters, 93 were revealed at Makkah and 21 were revealed at Madinah, but the 110th chapter, though belonging to the Madinah period, was revealed at Makkah during the well-known Farewell Pilgrimage.

The Madinan chapters, being generally longer, contain really about a third of the entire Quran. In arrangement, the Makkan revelation is intermixed with the Madinan revelation. Thus the Holy Quran opens with a Makkan revelation, which is entitled the "Opening", and is followed by four chapters revealed at Madinah, which take up over one-fifth of the whole Book. Then follow alternately Makkan and Madinan revelations.

As regards the dates of the revelation of the various Makkan chapters, it is difficult to assign a particular year to a particular chapter, except in rare cases, but broadly they may be divided into three groups: those revealed in the early Makkan period, i.e., during the first five years; those revealed in the middle Makkan period, i.e., from the sixth to the tenth year; and those revealed during the late Makkan period, i.e., from the 11th year to the Flight (*Hijrah*). The dates of the Madinan chapters, on the other hand, are tolerably certain and definite, but in this case the difficulty is that the revelation of the longer chapters extended over lengthy periods, and a chapter which undoubtedly belongs to the earliest days at Madinah sometimes contains verses which were revealed in the closing days of the Holy Prophet's life.

Chronological order

The first five verses of the 96th chapter were undoubtedly the first revelation, and these were equally certainly followed by the first part of the 74th chapter, which again was, in all probability, followed by the first chapter, after which came the first part of the 73rd chapter. Beyond this, it is impossible to give a tolerably certain order. The attempt to give a chronological order of chapters is an undoubted failure, as even the shorter chapters were not revealed

entire. For instance, only verses 1 to 5 of chapter 96 were revealed first, verses 6 to 19 coming long afterwards as they refer to events of four years later. In case of chapter 2, its revelation undoubtedly began in 1 or 2 A.H., but it is equally certain that it contains verses which were revealed in 10 A.H. A chronological order of the different chapters is, therefore, an impossibility, and all that we can say with tolerable certainty is that the greater part of a certain chapter was revealed during a certain period.

Makkan and Madinan revelations intermingled in the final arrangement

In the present arrangement, chapters revealed at Makkah and those revealed at Madinah are intermingled. The reasons underlying this arrangement relate to the chief features which distinguish the Makkan from the Madinan revelations. While the Makkan revelations grounded the Muslims in faith in God, the Madinan revelation was meant to translate the faith into action. It is true that exhortations for good and noble deeds are met with in the Makkan revelations and that faith is still shown in the Madinan revelations to be the foundation on which the structure of deeds should be built, but, in the main, stress is laid in the former on faith in an Omnipresent and Omnipotent God Who requites every good and evil deed, while the latter deals chiefly with what is good and what is evil; in other words, with the details of the law.

Another feature distinguishing the two revelations is that, while the Makkan revelation is generally prophetical, the revelation that came down at Madinah deals with the fulfilment of prophecy. Again, if the Makkan revelation shows how true happiness of mind may be sought in communion with God, the Madinan revelation points out how man's dealing with man may be a source of bliss and comfort to him. Hence, a judicious arrangement of the Holy Quran could be made to rest only on the intermingling of the two revelations.

A summary of the Holy Quran

The Holy Book is prefaced with a short Makkan chapter which, in its seven short verses, contains the essence of the whole of the Quran, and teaches a prayer which is admittedly the most beautiful of all prayers taught by any religion, and which sets before man an ideal greater than any other which can be conceived. If the preface is the quintessence of the Quran and places before man the highest

ideal, the commencement of the Book is equally logical, for the second chapter opens with a clear statement as to its aims and objects. Chapters 2 to 5 all belong to the Madinan revelation and, occupying as they do over a fifth of the whole Quran, deal in detail with the teachings of Islam, comparing them with the previously existing teachings, particularly Jewish and Christian, which had by that time become the prototypes of error in religion, the former laying too much stress on outward ritual, while utterly neglecting the spirit, and the latter condemning law itself, trusting to faith in Christ alone. The greater part of Islamic law dealing with the individual, home and civic life of man is contained in these four chapters.

These are followed by two of the longest Makkan chapters, 6 and 7, the first of which deals in detail with the doctrine of Divine Unity, and the second with that of prophethood. This latter chapter illustrates the doctrine of prophethood with reference to the histories of some well-known prophets. These two are again followed by two Madinan chapters, which fit in with the context, as they show how opposition to Truth as revealed to the Holy Prophet was dealt with: the first of these — the 8th — deals with their discomfiture in the first struggle in the Battle of Badr, and the second — the 9th — with their final vanquishment.

Then follows a group of seven Makkan chapters (10th to 16th), the *Alif Lām Rā* group, dealing with the truth of the Holy Prophet's revelations, internal evidence, evidence from man's nature, from the histories of the previous prophets and from external nature, being produced to establish that truth. Another group of five Makkan chapters follows it, all dealing with the greatness to which Islam was destined to rise, with special reference to Jewish history in ch. 17, to Christian history and doctrine in ch. 18 and ch. 19, to the history of Moses in ch. 20, and to the history of prophets in general and their deliverance in ch. 21.

Two more Makkan chapters follow, the 22nd showing that the Prophet's cause must triumph, though the faithful would be required to make great sacrifices for the cause of Truth, and the 23rd showing that the foundation on which the greatness of the Muslim nation rested was moral, not material. A Madinan chapter — the 24th — is then brought in to show how the prophecies of the Makkan revelations were being brought to fulfilment by the establishment of a Muslim kingdom and the dissemination of the

spiritual light of Islam. The 25th chapter is again a Makkan revelation, which shows, as its name indicates, that the distinction between truth and falsehood which the Holy Quran was to establish was witnessed in the lives of the Companions of the Holy Prophet.

A group of three more Makkan chapters (26th to 28th), the *Ṭā Sīn* group, is then introduced, prophesying the ultimate triumph of the Holy Prophet with special reference to the triumph of Moses over a powerful enemy who was bent upon destroying the Israelites. Another group of four Makkan chapters (29th to 32nd), the *Alif Lām Mīm* group, follows and shows that the state of helplessness and utter weakness in which the Muslims were at the time would soon be changed.

A Madinan chapter, the 33rd, is again inserted showing how the combined forces of the enemies of Islam in the Battle of the Allies failed to crush Islam. The utmost simplicity of the Holy Prophet's domestic life is here brought in to show that the attractions of this world, such as wealth or kingdom, had no charm for him, despite the fact that he then ruled Arabia, and that he was to be a model for all nations and for all ages, no prophet being needed after him, and emphasizing that it was only shortsighted critics who found fault with a man who led a life of such unexampled purity and simplicity.

A group of six Makkan chapters follows (34th to 39th), showing that the rise and fall of nations are brought about by the good and evil they do, and that nations which rise to greatness can retain their eminent position only if they are not ungrateful for the favours conferred upon them.

The next group of seven Makkan chapters (40 to 46) is known as the *Ḥā Mīm* group, and it lays stress on the fact that Truth must overcome opposition and that no temporal power with all the material resources at its back can annihilate Truth. This is followed by a group of three Madinan chapters: the 47th, which was revealed in 1 A.H., showing that those who had accepted the truth as revealed to the Holy Prophet, though in great distress, would soon have their condition ameliorated; the 48th, which belongs to 6 A.H., predicting in the clearest words the final triumph of Islam over all the religions of the world; and the last of this group, ch. 49, which was revealed towards the close of the Holy Prophet's life, enjoining on the Muslims the duty of respect for one another.

From the 50th to the 56th is another group of seven Makkan chapters pointing out the great spiritual awakening which was to be brought about by the Holy Quran. Then comes the last group of Madinan revelations, ten chapters in all, from the 57th to the 66th, which supplement what has already been said in the previous Madinan chapters, the last two of these, the 65th and 66th, being clearly a supplement to the second chapter, *al-Baqarah,* and dealing with the subject of divorce and temporary separation.

Then follow 48 short Makkan chapters, showing how people and nations can rise to eminence by following the Truth which is revealed in the Holy Quran, and how they suffer loss by rejecting the Truth. The Holy Book ends with a concise but clear declaration of Divine Unity, in chapter 112; the last two chapters show how to seek refuge in Divine protection against all kinds of mischief.

Key

It is sometimes necessary to know whether the words "you" and "your" in the translation, when not referring to Allah, occur in the singular or plural in the Arabic text. To indicate the singular case in this translation, the initial letter "y" is set in italic font, as follows: *y*ou. For example, in 2:4 in the words "revealed to *y*ou", the word "*y*ou" is in the singular, referring to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, while in 4:140 in the words "revealed to you" the word "you" is plural, referring to all Muslims. Note that whenever Allah is addressed, it is always in the singular in the Arabic text of the Quran, and in those cases in this translation the letter "y" has been capitalised, as in "You" and "Your".

Footnotes: Footnote numbering on each page starts afresh from *a.* At the beginning of each footnote, the footnote mark (*a, b, c,* etc.) is followed in parentheses by the number of the verse that it refers to; for example: ***a*** **(20)**. When two or more footnotes refer to the same verse, a serial number is added here; for example: ***c*** **(4-1)** and ***d*** **(4-2)** refer to the first and second footnotes of verse 4.

Transliteration: Common words are not transliterated, such as Islam, Quran, Allah, Muhammad, Hadith (which would be: Islām, Qur'ān, Allāh, Muḥammad, Ḥadīth). Some names are transliterated only to the extent of placing the 'bar' over the letters *a, i,* or *u,* to indicate that the vowel is long, as a guide to pronunciation. Full transliteration marks are only used when the exact form of a word or phrase in Arabic needs to be represented, and in all such cases that text is printed in italics. For all words that are not fully transliterated, the full transliteration is provided on a page entitled *Transliterated Forms* following the Index (p. 790).

Sections: The division of the longer chapters of the Quran, from ch. 2 to ch. 79, into *sections* (each known as a *rukū'*) is only found in certain parts of the Muslim world, such as the Indian subcontinent. The section headings given in this work (following Maulana Muhammad Ali's original translation) are inserted by the translator, and are not found in the Quran itself.

The Holy Quran

Chapter 1

Al-Fātiḥah The Opening

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.[a]

1 Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds,[b]

2 The Beneficent, the Merciful,

3 Master of the day of Recompense.[c]

4 You do we serve and You do we beseech for help.[d]

5 Guide us on the right path,[e]

6 The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favours,[f]

7 Not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray.[g]

Introduction

Al-Fātiḥah or *The Opening* is the quintessence of the whole of the Holy Quran. It formed an essential part of the Muslim prayers from the earliest days of Islam. The chapter is headed by the words *Bi-smillāh-ir-Raḥmān-ir-Raḥīm* ("In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful"), which also head every other chapter of the Quran except the ninth. The first three verses speak of the four chief Divine attributes, namely, providence, beneficence, mercy and requital, and the last three lay open before the Great Maker the earnest desire of man's soul to walk in righteousness, without stumbling on either side, while the middle verse is expressive of man's entire dependence on Allah. These Divine attributes disclose Allah's all-encompassing beneficence and care, and His unbounded love for all of His creatures, and the ideal to which the soul is made to aspire is the path of righteousness, the path of grace, and the path in which there is no stumbling.

Notes

a. The phrase is equivalent to: I seek the assistance of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. The word *Allāh* is a proper name applied to the Being Who exists necessarily by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection.

Raḥmān ("Beneficent") and *Raḥīm* ("Merciful") both signify *tenderness requiring the exercise of beneficence*, the former indicating the greatest preponderance of the quality of mercy, and the latter being expressive of a constant repetition and manifestation of the attribute. *Ar-Raḥmān* is the Beneficent God Whose love and mercy are manifested in the creation of this world, and *ar-Raḥīm* is the Merciful God Whose love and mercy are manifested in the state that comes

after, in the consequences of people's deeds. Thus the former is expressive of the utmost degree of love and generosity, and includes both the believer and the unbeliever for its objects, while the latter is expressive of unbounded and constant favour and mercy, and relates specially to the believer.

b **(1)** *Rabb* ("Lord") is the Author of all existence Who has not only given to the whole creation its means of nourishment but has also beforehand ordained for each a sphere of capacity and within that sphere provided the means by which it continues to attain gradually to its goal of perfection. There is no single word in English carrying the significance of the word *Rabb — Nourisher to perfection* would be nearest. Thus the very first words of the Quran — *Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds* — are in consonance with the cosmopolitan nature of the religion of Islam, which requires belief in prophets of all nations.

c **(3)** The adoption of the word *master* is to show that Allah can forgive His servants, because He is not a mere king or a mere judge, but more properly a Master. The word *yaum* ("day") is applied in the Holy Quran to any period of time, from a moment (55:29) to fifty thousand years (70:4), and may therefore indicate an indefinitely small or indefinitely large amount of time. In describing God as Master of the day of Recompense, the Holy Quran lays stress, on the one hand, on the fact that the Divine law of recompense of deeds is working every moment, and thus makes man feel the responsibility of what he does, and gives prominence, on the other, to the quality of forgiveness in Divine nature as God's dealing with man is like that of a Master Who is essentially merciful.

d **(4)** Here the way is pointed out through which man can attain to real greatness. It is through *'ibādat* (service) of God, which means *obedience* combined with complete humility, and through seeking help from God. The idea of *'ibādat* in Islam is not a mere declaration of the glory of God, but the imbibing of Divine morals and receiving their impress through humble service to God.

e **(5)** *Hidāyat* (guidance) means not only *showing the way* but also *leading one on the right way till one reaches the goal*.

f **(6)** Those upon whom favours are bestowed are the four classes mentioned in 4:69, namely, the prophets, the truthful, the faithful and the righteous. It is in the footsteps of these spiritual leaders of the world that the Muslim aspires to walk, the chief aim of his life thus being not only his own spiritual perfection but to try also for the spiritual perfection of others.

g **(7)** Muslims are warned here that even after receiving Divine favours they may incur Divine displeasure and go astray from the path which leads to the goal of perfection. The Jews provide an example of a people failing in righteous deeds, failing to carry out the spirit of the doctrine while retaining the doctrine, and the Christians an example of a people corrupting the doctrine itself. The Muslims are thus taught a prayer that they may neither fail in good deeds while retaining the letter of the law, nor corrupt the doctrine, and that they may be kept on the middle path, avoiding either extreme.

Chapter 2

Al-Baqarah The Cow

The name of this chapter is taken from the story in verses 67–71 regarding the slaughter of a *cow,* cow-worship having taken a hold among the Jews. This chapter deals mainly with the Israelites and their contentions against Islam, and hence much of the legislation, details of which necessarily differ from the Jewish law, is dealt with in this chapter. The last chapter contains a prayer for being guided on the right path (1:5), and here that guidance is afforded in the opening words: "This Book, in which there is no doubt, is a guide" (v. 2).

The chapter deals with: the fundamental principles of Islam, need for Divine revelation, history of the Israelite nation, the replacement of former scriptures by the Quran, the covenant with Abraham, Islamic teachings on various important matters (including fasting, pilgrimage, wars, marriage and divorce), the power of Allah to give life to dead nations, and the need to sacrifice wealth in the cause of Truth. It ends with a prayer for the ultimate triumph of truth. This chapter was revealed at Madinah, mostly in the years 1 and 2 A.H.

Section 1: **Fundamental principles of Islam**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Part 1

1 I, Allah, am the Best Knower.[a] **2**This Book, in which there is no doubt, is a guide to those who keep their duty,[b] **3**who believe

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a **(1)** This verse consists of the letters *alif, lām, mīm*. The combinations of letters or single letters occurring at the commencement of several chapters of the Quran are, according to the best received opinion, abbreviations standing for words. Translations of the Holy Quran generally leave these abbreviations untranslated. The *alif, lām, mīm*, occuring here as well as at the commencement of five other chapters, are interpreted by some early authorities as meaning "I, Allah, am the best Knower", *alif* standing for *ana, lām* for *Allāh*, and *mīm* for *a'lam,* being respectively the first, the middle and the last letters of the words for which they stand. Others regard them as contractions for some Divine attribute.

b **(2)** The application of the word "book" (*kitāb*) to the Holy Quran occurs in very early revelations, and shows clearly that the Quran was from the first meant to be a *complete book* that existed not only in the memory of people but also in writing. The Quran is here described as affording guidance to those who keep their duty, because the sense of keeping his duty is innate in man. No guidance would benefit those who have no regard for their duty.

in the Unseen[a] and keep up prayer and spend (on good works) out of what We have given them,[b] **4**and who believe in what has been revealed to *y*ou and what was revealed before *y*ou,[c] and of the Hereafter[d] they are sure. **5**These are on a right course from their Lord and these it is that are successful.

6 Those who disbelieve — to whom it is the same whether *y*ou warn them or do not warn them[e] — they will not believe. **7**Allah has sealed their hearts and their hearing; and there is a covering on their eyes, and for them is a grievous punishment.[f]

Section 2: **Lip-profession**

8 And there are some people who say: We believe in Allah and

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a **(3-1)** The Unseen here stands for Allah, a belief in Whose existence is the cardinal principle of religion.

b **(3-2)** In Islam prayer assumed a regularity and a form. However, it is not the mere observance of the form that the Quran requires, but the keeping of it in a right state, i.e., being true to the spirit of the prayer. Spending out of what one has been given stands for *charity* in its broadest sense, or the doing of good to all creatures. This verse lays down the two prime duties which are necessary for spiritual advancement: prayer to God and service to humanity.

c **(4-1)** Islam requires faith in all the prophets of the world and the recognition of truth in all religions. The words *what was revealed before you (O Prophet)* include revelations to all the nations of the world, for we are elsewhere told that "there is not a people but a warner has gone among them" (35:24). A Muslim is therefore one who believes in all the prophets of God, sent to any nation, whether their names are mentioned in the Holy Quran or not.

d **(4-2)** A life after death, according to Islam, implies a state of existence which begins with death, but a complete manifestation of which takes place later, when the fruits of the actions done in this life take their final shape. A belief in God and a belief in the Hereafter, being respectively the first and the last of the fundamental principles of Islam as mentioned here, often stand for a belief in all the fundamental principles of Islam, as in 2:8, 2:62, etc.

e **(6)** The passage is parenthetical, meaning that disbelievers of a particular type, i.e., those who pay no heed at all to the Holy Prophet's warning, cannot benefit by his preaching.

f **(7)** Only those disbelievers are spoken of here who so hardened their hearts as not to pay any heed to the Prophet's preaching and warning, as clearly indicated in the previous verse; compare 7:179: "They have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. They are as cattle." Allah is here spoken of as having sealed their hearts and ears because He made them taste the consequences of their heedlessness.

the Last Day; and they are not believers.[a] **9**They seek to deceive Allah and those who believe, and they deceive only themselves and they do not perceive. **10**In their hearts is a disease, so Allah increased their disease,[b] and for them is a painful punishment because they lie. **11**And when it is said to them, Do not make mischief in the land, they say: We are only peacemakers. **12**Now surely they are the mischief-makers, but they do not perceive. **13**And when it is said to them, Believe as the people believe, they say: Shall we believe as the fools believe? Now surely they are the fools, but they do not know.

14 And when they meet those who believe, they say: We believe; and when they are alone with their devils,[c] they say: Surely we are with you, we were only mocking. **15**Allah will pay them back their mockery,[d] and He leaves them alone in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on. **16**These are they who buy error for guidance, so their bargain brings no gain, nor are they guided.

17 Their parable is as the parable of one who kindles a fire, but when it illumines all around him, Allah takes away their light, and leaves them in darkness[e] — they cannot see. **18**Deaf, dumb, (and) blind, so they do not return (to the right way), **19**or like abundant rain from the cloud in which is darkness, and thunder and lightning; they put their fingers into their ears because of the thunder-peal, for fear of death. And Allah encompasses the disbelievers. **20**The lightning almost takes away their sight. Whenever it shines on them

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a **(8)** Belief in Allah and the Last Day is here equivalent to the profession of Islam. After speaking of the accepters and the rejecters of the Holy Prophet's message, the Quran now speaks of the insincere people who accept the message only with their lips. The persons spoken of in this verse are the hypocrites, who were a source of constant trouble to the Holy Prophet at Madinah.

b **(10)** In 71:6 Noah is made to say: "But my call has only made them flee the more", though the call was meant to bring them nearer to the truth. The disease here stands for the weakness of their hearts, for they had not the courage to deny Islam openly, and this weakness only became the greater as the cause of Islam became more and more triumphant.

c **(14)** By their *devils* are meant their *evil companions*, as stated in 2:76.

d **(15)** God will requite them with punishment according to their mockery.

e **(17)** The kindler of the fire is the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who kindled the torch of light. The light of their eyes, which alone could make them take advantage of the light which was lit up by the Prophet, was taken away. The act of taking away the light is attributed to Allah, as the remote cause.

they walk in it, and when it becomes dark to them they stand still.[a] And if Allah had pleased, He would have taken away their hearing and their sight. Surely Allah is Powerful over all things.

Section 3: **Divine Unity**

21 O people, serve your Lord Who created you and those before you, so that you may guard against evil, **22**Who made the earth a resting-place for you and the heaven a structure,[b] and sends down rain from the clouds then brings forth with it fruits for your sustenance; so do not set up rivals to Allah while you know. **23**And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call on your helpers besides Allah if you are truthful.[c] **24**But if you do not (do it) — and you can never do (it) — then be on your guard against the fire whose fuel is people and stones;[d] it is prepared for the disbelievers.

25 And give good news to those who believe and do good deeds, that for them are Gardens in which rivers flow.[e] Whenever they are

***a* (20)** When difficulties and distresses befell the Muslims — when it became dark — the hypocrites and the weak-hearted stood still. They refused to keep company with the Muslims in the battles which the latter had to fight. When there was a flash of lightning, and a success followed — a success so great that it almost blinded them — they would walk on a little and seem to be keeping company with the Muslims.

***b* (22)** Attention is thus drawn to the oneness of humanity, as if it were a single family living in one resting-place under one roof.

***c* (23)** A similar challenge is contained in 10:38. See also 11:13. In 17:88 the whole of mankind are declared to be unable to produce a book like the Quran. While the Quran is undoubtedly a unique production of Arabic literature, its chief characteristic, in which no other book can claim equality with it, is the wonderful, unparalleled transformation which it accomplished. Its injunctions swept off the most deep-rooted evils and made an ignorant people the foremost torchbearers of knowledge and science, and masters of the greatest empire of the world. Besides, every word of the Quran gives expression to Divine majesty and glory in a manner which is not approached by any other sacred book.

***d* (24)** The reference in "stones" may be to the leaders, called "helpers" in the previous verse, while "people" would stand for the common people.

***e* (25-1)** The description of paradise as given in the Holy Quran is expressly stated to be a parable; see 13:35, 47:15. The righteous are spoken of as having gardens in the next life to show that they have made the seed of faith to grow into extensive gardens, and this is in reference to the vast development of their inner self or of the faculties which God has given them. The rivers represent the good

given a portion of the fruit of these (Gardens), they will say: This is what was given to us before; and they are given the like of it.[a] And they will have therein pure companions [b] and therein they will abide.

26 Surely Allah does not disdain to set forth any parable — a gnat or anything above that.[c] Then as for those who believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord; and as for those who disbelieve, they say: What is it that Allah means by this parable? Many He leaves in error by it[d] and many He leads aright by it. And He leaves in error by it only the transgressors, **27**who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut apart what Allah has ordered to be joined,[e] and make mischief in the land. These it is that are the losers.

28 How can you deny Allah and you were without life and He gave you life? Again, He will cause you to die and again bring you

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deeds which are necessary to the growth of the seed. The fruits of the life after death are the consequences of the deeds done in this life.

a **(25-2)** Whenever the faithful are made to taste of a portion of the fruits of their good deeds in the life to come, they will find those fruits much resembling the fruits which they tasted spiritually in this life. *The like of it* may signify that the fruits of their deeds will be similar to those deeds.

b **(25-3)** The *pure companions* may be the believing wives of the faithful, as elsewhere we have: "They and their wives are in shades, reclining on raised couches" (36:56). But more probably these are among the blessings of the heavenly life to which men and women are equally entitled. All the blessings of heavenly life are, according to a saying of the Holy Prophet, "*things which no eye has seen and no ear has heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of them*" (Bukhari, 59:8, hadith 3244). The words in which these blessings are depicted in the Holy Quran, therefore, should not be taken literally.

c **(26-1)** The parables to which reference is contained in these words are the parables speaking of the weakness of the false deities; see 29:41, 22:73. The gnat is mentioned here because among the Arabs it is a proverbially weak creature, so that to express the utmost degree of weakness they say, *weaker than the gnat*.

d **(26-2)** Allah guides people by sending His messengers, and therefore He could not be spoken of as leading them astray. When ascribed to God, the word *aḍalla* used here means *He pronounced him to be erring* or *He left him in error*.

e **(27)** The covenant of Allah is the evidence of His Unity to which human nature bears witness. The confirmation of this covenant is brought about by sending prophets. Cutting off what Allah has ordered to be joined is the disregard of others' rights.

to life, then you shall be brought back to Him.[a] **29**He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth. And He directed Himself to the heaven,[b] so He made them complete seven heavens;[c] and He is Knower of all things.

Section 4: **Greatness of mankind and need for revelation**

30 And when *y*our Lord said to the angels, [d] I am going to place a ruler in the earth,[e] they said: Will You place in it such as make mischief in it and shed blood? And we celebrate Your praise and extol Your holiness. He said: Surely I know what you do not know.[f] **31**And He taught Adam[g] all the names,[h] then presented them to

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***a* (28)** The first part of the verse contains an argument of the existence of God Who gave life to man, and the second states that death on this earth is not the end of life but the beginning of another, an eternal and a far higher life.

***b* (29-1)** The earth was made after the heavens; see 79:30.

***c* (29-2)** The word *sab'a*, which signifies the number *seven*, is also used as meaning seven or more, several or many. In 65:12 it is affirmed that as there are seven heavens so there is a like number of earths, and the seven heavens are called the *seven ways* in 23:17, and in this sense the orbit of a planet may be called its *heaven*. The seven heavens may also be taken to apply to the whole starry creation and the reference may in this case be to the magnitudes of the stars.

***d* (30-1)** Allah's saying to the angels is really the expression of an intention which is to be brought into execution. It is not a conversation, or a consultation with the angels; it is an expression of the Divine will to those intermediary beings who are entrusted by the Divine Being with its execution. The existence of such intermediaries has been recognized by the righteous in all ages and all countries.

***e* (30-2)** This shows the high place that man was destined to hold in the whole of creation. What is stated here is an allegorical description of the preference of man above the whole of the creation on this earth, and then of the election of those righteous servants of Allah from among men themselves who lead others into the right path. One view is that the word "ruler" (*khalīfa*) here refers to the whole of mankind, which is corroborated by the Quran itself in 6:165.

***f* (30-3)** Being entrusted with such great powers, man could use them rightly or wrongly. The whole history of mankind is briefly written in this one verse. Man is the greatest killer on this earth but he also turns the gifts of God to the best use. To God was known the brighter side of this picture; hence the words, *I know what you do not know*.

***g* (31-1)** Nowhere in the Holy Quran is it affirmed that Adam was the first man or that there was no creation before him. Great Muslim theologians have held that there were many Adams — thousands of Adams — before the great ancestor of mankind known by this name. Adam, therefore, though it may also be the name of a particular man, stands for mankind generally.

***h* (31-2)** Teaching Adam the names signifies the vast capability of man and

the angels; He said: Tell Me the names of those if you are right.
32They said: Glory be to You! We have no knowledge but what
You have taught us. Surely You are the Knowing, the Wise.
33He said: O Adam, inform them of their names. So when he
informed them of their names, He said: Did I not say to you that I
know what is unseen in the heavens and the earth? And I know what
you manifest and what you hide.[a]

34 And when We said to the angels, Be submissive to Adam,
they submitted,[b] but not Iblīs. He refused and was proud, and he
was one of the disbelievers.[c] **35**And We said: O Adam, dwell *y*ou
and *y*our wife in the garden, and eat from it a plentiful (food)
wherever you wish,[d] and do not approach this tree or you would be
from among the unjust.[e] **36**But the devil made them slip from it,

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the superiority of his knowledge to that of the angels. Or, the reference may be to the faculty of speech, which is the real source of the excellence of man above the whole of creation.

***a* (33)** "What you hide" refers to those great qualities in man which preponderate the evil in him, and which remain hidden until they are made manifest through the Divine gift of knowledge. The immense capability of man for progress remains hidden, while the evil of shedding blood is manifested in a very primary stage in his growth.

***b* (34-1)** Adam throughout this section stands for man generally; so submission is to man generally. Man has a superiority over the angels on account of his great gift of knowledge of things, the angels being the controlling powers of the forces of nature. By his knowledge man could harness the forces of nature and exercise control over them; in other words, the angels submitted to him.

***c* (34-2)** Iblīs and Satan (Arabic: *shaiṭān*) refer to one and the same being. The word *Iblīs* is used when the evil one's evil is limited to himself, and *Satan,* when his evil affects others besides himself. The angels' submission meant that man could control the forces of nature by his knowledge of things. But he himself was a part of nature, and he could not conquer his own evil desires. The conquest of self needed yet another act of Divine mercy: the sending of Divine Revelation. Note that Iblīs was not one of the angels.

***d* (35-1)** The garden spoken of in this verse was on this earth, as it was on the earth that man was placed. It was certainly not the paradise to which people go after death, and from which they will never be expelled (15:48). The placing in the garden signifies leading a life of ease and comfort, as is shown by the words that follow: "Eat from it a plentiful food wherever you wish". These may also be translated as: *Eat from it wherever you wish, having abundance of all things*.

***e* (35-2)** It was the tree of the spiritual death of man, the tree of evil. Compare 14:24–26, where a good word is likened to "a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are high, yielding its fruit in every season", and an evil

and caused them to depart from the state in which they were.[a] And We said: Go forth, some of you are enemies of others.[b] And there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time.

37 Then Adam received (revealed) words from his Lord, and He turned to him (mercifully). Surely He is Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.[c] **38**We said: Go forth from this (state) all. Surely a guidance from Me will come to you, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.[d] **39**And (as to) those who disbelieve in and reject Our messages, they are the companions of the Fire; in it they will abide.[e]

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word is likened to "an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface; it has no stability". The order to eat from the earth a plentiful food but not to approach evil is really a description of what pure human nature is. Man is entitled to all the benefits of nature to maintain the body so long as he does not forget his soul.

***a* (36-1)** The words mean that the devil *made them commit a fault unintentionally*. The result was that they were made to depart from the happy condition in which they were. The Quran contradicts the Bible: it was not the serpent that misled Eve, nor did Eve mislead Adam. The devil cast an evil suggestion into the minds of both Adam and Eve, as he casts evil suggestions into the mind of every son and daughter of Adam and Eve.

***b* (36-2)** The new condition in which man finds himself by submitting to his low desires is the condition of the mutual enmity of one to the other, the tyranny of man to man being undoubtedly the greatest evil which man can commit. The use of the words "some of you are enemies of others" shows clearly that this address is to all mankind.

***c* (37)** Man is found too weak to overcome the evil suggestions of the devil or the evil inclinations in him, however strong he may be to conquer the forces of nature. So God comes to his help and reveals Himself to him. He sends down revelation which, strengthening his faith in God, gives him the strength to overcome the devil and reject his suggestions.

***d* (38)** This is a statement of a general law that Divine Revelation will be granted to the whole of humanity and prophets will appear everywhere from time to time, and by following the guidance sent by God through His prophets people will attain to a state of perfection in which "no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve". Those who truly follow the Divine Revelation shall have no fear of the devil misleading them, nor shall they grieve at wasting the opportunity given them in this life.

***e* (39)** The people spoken of in this verse are those who not only disbelieve but also exert their utmost to oppose revealed truth and uproot it. They keep company with evil in this life, so the fire becomes their companion in the next to purge them of the evil consequences of their evil deeds. Their hearts burn with evil passions in this life, and it is this very fire that assumes a palpable shape in the next. Note that the word *khālidūn* ("abide") signifies simply *abiding,* which may be for a long time, and does not necessarily convey the idea of perpetuity.

Section 5: **Israelite prophecies fulfilled in the Quran**

40 O Children of Israel, call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me, I shall fulfil (My) covenant with you; and Me, Me alone, should you fear.[a] **41**And believe in what I have revealed, verifying what is (already) with you, and do not be the first to deny it; nor take a small price for My messages;[b] and keep your duty to Me, Me alone. **42**And do not mix up truth with falsehood, nor hide the truth while you know. **43**And keep up prayer and give the due charity [c] and bow down with those who bow down. **44**Do you tell people to be good and neglect your own souls while you read the Book? Have you then no sense? **45**And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and this is hard except for the humble ones, **46**who know that they will meet their Lord and that to Him they will return.

Section 6: **Divine favours on Israel**

47 O Children of Israel, call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations.[d] **48**And guard yourselves against a day when no soul will avail another in

***a* (40)** After speaking of the need of Divine Revelation, the Quran now speaks of a nation to whom this favour was granted, among whom many prophets were raised and who were also made rulers in the earth (see 5:20). The Jewish people who are addressed here are generally mentioned as Children of Israel, Israel being the other name of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham. For the covenants spoken of here, see Deuteronomy 26:17–19. The covenant included the acceptance of the revelation to the promised prophet of Deut. 18:18.

***b* (41)** The verification referred to here is clearly the fulfilment of the promise contained in Deuteronomy 18:15–18: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear…". No prophet ever claimed to have come in fulfilment of this prophecy except the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The religious leaders rejected the truth which the Holy Prophet brought, fearing to lose their high position as leaders. They thus sacrificed truth to the inducements of this life, and took "a small price" for it.

***c* (43)** These are the two fundamental principles of religion: worship of God through prayer to Him, and service of humanity or helping the poor.

***d* (47)** By "the nations" are meant *the people contemporaneous with the Israelites in their days of triumph*, or *large masses of people*. Numerous prophets were raised among them, and they were made to rule in the earth, and these are the favours of which Moses also reminds them (5:20).

the least, neither will intercession be accepted on its behalf,[a] nor will compensation be taken from it, nor will they be helped.

49 And when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people, who subjected you to severe torment, killing your sons and sparing your women, and in this there was a great trial from your Lord. **50**And when We parted the sea for you, so We saved you and drowned the people of Pharaoh while you saw.[b] **51**And when We appointed a time of forty nights with Moses, then you took the calf (for a god) after him, and you were unjust.[c] **52**Then We pardoned you after that so that you might give thanks.

53 And when We gave Moses the Book and the criterion[d] that you might walk aright. **54**And when Moses said to his people: My people, you have surely wronged yourselves by taking the calf (for a god), so turn to your Creator (penitently), and kill your passions.[e] That is best for you with your Creator. So He turned to you (mercifully). Surely He is the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.

55 And when you said: Moses, we will not believe in *y*ou till we see Allah manifestly, so the punishment overtook you while you

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***a* (48)** The Islamic doctrine that the prophets and the righteous will intercede for sinners on the day of Judgment really means that if they took as their model a righteous servant of God and did their best to follow him, this will shelter them from their own weaknesses. See further 2:255 footnote 1 and 4:85 footnote.

***b* (50)** The Quran does not say how the Israelites were made to pass through the sea or in what manner the parting of the sea was brought about. One explanation is that the Israelites passed when the sea receded on account of the ebb, and the Egyptians were drowned because the tide was on at the time, and in their zeal to overtake the Israelites they did not care for it.

***c* (51)** While the making of the calf is attributed to Aaron in the Bible, the Holy Quran declares that prophet to be innocent in the matter.

***d* (53)** *Furqān* ('criterion', 'distinction') is *anything that makes a distinction between truth and falsity*, and hence it signifies a *proof* or *demonstration* and also *aid* or *victory*. In the sense of distinction, the *furqān* given to Moses was Pharaoh's drowning in the sea and the deliverance of the Israelites. In the case of the Holy Prophet the Battle of *Badr* afforded the *furqān* or *distinction*, and hence the Battle of Badr is called *yaum al-furqān* or *the day of distinction* in 8:41.

***e* (54)** The Holy Quran rejects the Bible story of the Israelites being killed as a punishment for calf-worship. They were pardoned and were told simply to repent, and God accepted their repentance, as clearly stated here. Therefore *anfusa-kum* does not mean here *your people*, but *your desires* or *your passions.* No prophet ever taught that a man can be killed for the worship of an object other than God.

looked on.[a] **56**Then We raised you up after your stupor that you might give thanks. **57**And We made the clouds to give shade over you and We sent to you manna and quails. Eat of the good things that We have given you. And they did Us no harm, but they wronged their own souls.

58 And when We said: Enter this city, then eat from it a plentiful (food) wherever you wish, and enter the gate submissively, and make petition for forgiveness. We will forgive you your wrongs and increase the reward of those who do good (to others). **59**But those who were unjust changed the word which had been spoken to them, for another saying,[b] so We sent upon the wrongdoers a pestilence from heaven because they transgressed.[c]

Section 7: **Divine favours on Israel**

60 And when Moses prayed for water for his people, We said: March on to the rock with *y*our staff.[d] So twelve springs flowed from it. Each tribe knew their drinking-place. Eat and drink of the provisions of Allah, and do not act corruptly, making mischief in the land. **61**And when you said: Moses, we cannot endure one food, so pray *y*our Lord on our behalf to bring forth for us out of what the earth grows, of its herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions.[e] He said: Would you exchange what is better for what is worse? Enter a city, so you will have what you ask for.

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a **(55)** See Exodus 19:16–17.

b **(59-1)** That is to say, they went against the Divine commandment.

c **(59-2)** When a punishment overtakes a people as a consequence of their wicked deeds, it is spoken of as coming from heaven, the significance probably being that it cannot be averted. The pestilence spoken of here is referred to in the Bible in Numbers 25:8–9, according to which 24,000 men died of the plague.

d **(60)** The words may mean *strike the rock with your staff* or *march on to the mountain with your staff* or *your community*. The story that Moses carried a stone with him and that twelve springs flowed from it whenever, placing it in the wilderness, he struck it with his staff, has no foundation in the words of the Holy Quran or any saying of the Holy Prophet. What the words of the Quran signify is either that Moses was commanded by God to strike a particular rock with his staff from which water flowed forth miraculously, or to march on to a mountain from which springs flowed.

e **(61-1)** The Israelites were required to live a hard life which would make them fit for conquering the Holy Land; this was better for them. But they wanted to live a life of ease and to have all kinds of food which they could get only by settling in towns and tilling the land.

And degradation and humiliation were stamped upon them, and they incurred Allah's wrath.[a] That was so because they disbelieved in the messages of Allah and would kill the prophets unjustly. That was so because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits.

Section 8: **Israelites' degeneration**

62 Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians,[b] whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.[c]

63 And when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain above you:[d] Hold on firmly what We have given you, and bear in mind what is in it, so that you may guard against evil. **64**Then after that you turned back; and if it had not been for the grace of Allah and His mercy on you, you would certainly have been among the losers. **65**And indeed you know those among you who violated the Sabbath,[e] so We said to them: Be (as) apes,

***a* (61-2)** The verse speaks of the ultimate condition to which the Israelites were reduced when they persisted in setting at naught the Divine commandments and indulged in immoral and depraved practices.

***b* (62-1)** The commentators hold different opinions regarding Sabians, most of them agreeing that they are representatives of a religion between Judaism and Christianity, based on the doctrine of unity, but also maintaining worship of angels.

***c* (62-2)** This verse strikes at the root of the idea of a favoured nation whose members alone may be entitled to salvation. The subject is introduced here to show that even the Jews, despite their transgressions which had made them deserving of Divine wrath, were entitled to a goodly reward if they believed and did good deeds. The statement made here is that salvation cannot be attained by mere lip-profession by any people, not even by the Muslims, unless they adhere to a true belief and do good deeds. The existence of good people in other religions is not denied by the Holy Quran, but perfect peace, or the state of absolute contentment which is indicated by freedom from fear and grief, is obtainable only in Islam, because it alone is the religion of absolute submission to the Divine Being.

***d* (63)** There is nothing in the words of the Quran to support the baseless story that the mountain was suspended in the air over the heads of the Israelites to frighten them into submission. The use of the word *rafʿ* ("raised") is in accordance with the Arabic idiom, for it signifies the *making high* or *lofty* of a building.

***e* (65-1)** There is no Sabbath among the Muslims because in Islam no particular day is set apart for Divine worship. On the other hand, the Muslim is required to pray in the very midst of his everyday work, and even the *Jumuʿah*

despised and hated.[a] **66**So We made them an example to those who witnessed it and those who came after it and an admonition to those who guard against evil.

67 And when Moses said to his people: Allah commands you to sacrifice a cow.[b] They said: Do *y*ou ridicule us? He said: I seek refuge with Allah from being one of the ignorant. **68**They said: Call on *y*our Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is. (Moses) said: He says, Surely she is a cow neither advanced in age nor too young, of middle age between these (two); so do what you are commanded. **69**They said: Call on *y*our Lord for our sake to make it clear to us what her colour is. (Moses) said: He says, She is a yellow cow; her colour is intensely yellow, delighting the onlookers. **70**They said: Call on *y*our Lord for our sake to make it clear to us what she is, for surely to us cows are all alike, and if Allah please we shall surely be guided aright. **71**(Moses) said: He says: She is a cow not made submissive to plough the land, nor does she water the crops, sound, without a blemish in her. They said: Now *y*ou have brought the truth. So they slaughtered her, though they were not inclined to do (it).

Section 9: **They grow in hard-heartedness**

72 And when you (almost) killed a man,[c] then you disagreed

(Friday) prayers are no exception, for the Quran expressly allows the doing of work both before and after the *Jumu'ah* prayers.

***a* (65-2)** An early commentator, Mujahid, gives the following explanation: "They were not transformed or metamorphosed; it is only a parable which Allah has set forth for them, the like of what He has set forth in likening them to asses (62:5), i.e., their hearts were transformed, not that they were metamorphosed into apes."

***b* (67)** As the Israelites held the cow in great honour, and even worshipped it, as is clear from their worship of the golden calf, they were ordered to slaughter such cows as were usually let loose to wander and worshipped as sacred objects, the aim being to root out cow-worship from among them.

***c* (72-1)** This incident refers to Jesus, as it was with respect to his death that disagreement took place and many doubted his death. Compare the incidents narrated here with the same incidents as narrated in 4:153–157. The words *you killed* are used because the Jews asserted that they had killed him, and because metaphorically a person may be said to have been killed when he is made to appear as if he were dead.

about it. And Allah was to bring forth what you were going to hide.[a] **73**So We said: Strike him with it partially. Thus Allah brings the dead to life,[b] and He shows you His signs that you may understand. **74**Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness. And surely there are some rocks from which streams burst forth; and there are some of them which split apart so water flows from them; and there are some of them which fall down for the fear of Allah.[c] And Allah is not heedless of what you do.

75 Do you then hope that they would believe in you, and some of them indeed used to hear the word of Allah, then altered it after they had understood it, and they know (this).[d] **76**And when they meet those who believe they say, We believe, and when they are apart with one another they say: Do you talk to them of what Allah has disclosed to you that they may contend with you by this before your Lord? Do you not understand? **77**Do they not know that Allah knows what they keep secret and what they make known? **78**And some of them are illiterate; they do not know the Book except (from) hearsay, and they only conjecture.[e]

79 Woe, then, to those who write the Book with their hands

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a **(72-2)** The Jews wanted to kill Jesus, but God ordained that he should not die. This was the bringing forth of what they were going to hide.

b **(73)** The act of murder was not completed in the case of Jesus, as the Gospels show, for after he was taken down from the cross his legs were not broken, as in the case of the thieves. This was really a case of giving life to the dead, for Jesus Christ was dead to all appearance. Those actually dead do not return to life in this world; see 21:95, 23:100 and 39:42.

c **(74)** Even hardened hearts would receive life — even more, they would give life to others, be a source of spiritual life for others as water and streams are sources of life in the physical world.

d **(75)** That the Israelites did not preserve their sacred books in their purity is a constant charge laid by the Holy Quran against the Jews. In fact, the alteration and corruption of the various books of the Bible is now proved beyond all doubt.

e **(78)** The Jewish masses had no access to their own sacred books which were known only to their learned men, and therefore their religious ideas were based only on stories which they knew from hearsay. The same is to a very large extent true of the Muslims of our day. In the early days of Islam, every individual Muslim, man as well as woman, sought light direct from the Quran. Not so the Muslims in this age who depend entirely on their learned men. They do read the Quran but look upon mere recitation as a meritorious deed without trying to learn what it says, and then act upon it.

then say, This is from Allah; so that they may take for it a small price. So woe to them for what their hands write and woe to them for what they earn. **80**And they say: Fire will not touch us but for a few days. Say: Have you received a promise from Allah? Then Allah will not fail to perform His promise. Or do you speak against Allah what you do not know? **81**Indeed, whoever earns evil and his sins beset him on every side, those are the companions of the Fire; in it they abide.[a] **82**And those who believe and do good deeds, these are the owners of the Garden; in it they abide.[b]

Section 10: **Their covenant and its violation**

83 And when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel:[c] You shall serve none but Allah. And do good to (your) parents, and to the near of kin and to orphans and the needy, and speak good (words) to (all) people,[d] and keep up prayer and give the due charity.[e] Then you turned back except a few of you, and you are averse. **84**And when We made a covenant with you: You shall not shed your blood, nor turn your people out of your cities; then you

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***a* (81)** The inmates of the Fire are here stated to be those who earn evil, and find themselves beset on every side by their evil deeds. These are the people who give themselves up to evil, and who therefore ultimately find themselves in the power of evil, which even in this life, but more palpably in the life after death, assumes the form of a burning fire. It should be noted that the one who struggles against evil, however long that struggle may take, to overcome an evil inclination, is not the one who earns evil, because the earnest struggle in which the fighter against evil hates and detests evil, and seeks to overcome it, always ends in a victory for the good and noble qualities in human beings.

***b* (82)** The doers of good are called *aṣḥāb al-Jannah* or *owners of the Garden*. The word *aṣḥāb* is plural of *ṣāḥib* which means a *companion* or *an owner*. I have translated *aṣḥāb an-nār* as *companions of the Fire* but *aṣḥāb al-Jannah* as *owners of the Garden*, because while the inmates of the Fire will be taken out of it after being purged of the evil, of paradise it is said that it is "a gift never to be cut off " (11:108), and that those in it will never be ejected from it (15:48).

***c* (83-1)** Allah's making a covenant with a people signifies His giving commandments to them.

***d* (83-2)** The word *qaul* (*speaking*) is used to express all kinds of deeds, and hence the speaking of good words to all stands for kind dealing with all.

***e* (83-3)** Prayer and *zakāt* ("due charity") as enjoined on the Israelites differed from the Islamic prayer and *zakāt* in details. The directions regarding tithe among the Israelites are contained in Deuteronomy 14:28–29.

promised and you bear witness.[a] **85**Yet you it is who would kill your people and turn some of you out of their homes, backing each other up against them unlawfully and exceeding the limits. And if they should come to you as captives you would ransom them, whereas their turning out itself was unlawful for you. Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other?[b] What then is the reward of such among you as do this but disgrace in the life of this world, and on the day of Resurrection they shall be sent back to the most grievous punishment. And Allah is not heedless of what you do. **86**These are they who buy the life of this world for the Hereafter, so their punishment shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped.

Section 11: **They reject the Prophet**

87 And We indeed gave Moses the Book and We sent messengers after him one after another; and We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear arguments and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit.[c]

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a **(84)** The previous verse speaks of a covenant with *the Children of Israel* while this one speaks of a covenant with *you*. The reference here is to the important treaty of mutual obligation in writing which the Holy Prophet entered into with the Jews when he settled at Madinah. By this treaty the Muslims and the Jews were bound not only not to turn their hands against each other but also to defend one another against a common enemy.

b **(85)** The reference is to the terms of the original treaty under which the Jews were bound to ransom the Muslims if they were made captives by an enemy. They did not openly repudiate the treaty but intrigued with the enemy to turn the Muslims out of Madinah. The reference in believing in a part of the book and disbelieving in the other is to this conduct of the Jews. Most commentators, however, understand that the reference here is to the alliance which the two Jewish tribes, Quraizah and Nadir, living side by side at Madinah, had made with Aus and Khazraj, the two rival tribes of Madinah respectively. When the latter fought against each other, their allies took part in the fighting, and thus one Jewish tribe slaughtered and imprisoned the other and laid waste their habitations, but afterwards collected subscriptions for the release of the Jewish prisoners, on the ground that the law commanded them to redeem the prisoners and they fought against their co-religionists for the honour of their allies.

c **(87)** Generally the epithet "son of Mary" is added to Jesus' name to show that he was a mortal like other prophets of God. The long chain of prophets that came after Moses ended in Jesus, Moses being the first and Jesus the last prophet of the Israelite dispensation. The idea of the Holy Ghost as met with in Christian religious literature is quite different from and opposed to the Jewish conception of the Holy Spirit which Islam accepts. The Holy Spirit is the angel which brought revelation: "The Holy Spirit has revealed it (i.e., the Quran) from your Lord" (16:102). Jesus' being strengthened with the Holy Spirit only means that he was granted Divine revelation like other prophets before him.

Is it then that whenever a messenger came to you with what your souls did not desire, you were arrogant? And some you rejected and others you would kill. **88**And they say: Our hearts are securely covered.[a] No, Allah has cursed them on account of their unbelief;[b] so it is little that they believe. **89**And when a Book from Allah came to them verifying what they (already) have, and before this they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved[c] — but when that which they recognized came to them, they disbelieved in it; so Allah's curse is on the disbelievers. **90**Evil is what they sell their souls for — that they should deny what Allah has revealed, out of envy that Allah should send down of His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases; so they incur wrath upon wrath. And there is a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers.

91 And when it is said to them, Believe in what Allah has revealed, they say: We believe in what was revealed to us. And they deny what is besides that, while it is the Truth verifying what they (already) have.[d] Say: Why then did you kill Allah's prophets before (this) if you were believers?[e] **92**And Moses indeed came to you with clear arguments, then you took the calf (for a god) in his absence and you were wrongdoers. **93**And when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain above you: Take hold of what We have given you with firmness and obey. They said: We hear and disobey.[f] And they were made to imbibe (the love of) the

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***a* (88-1)** The meaning is either that they said that their hearts were so full of knowledge already that they stood in no need of any further knowledge, or that their hearts were covered from hearing and accepting what the Prophet said.

***b* (88-2)** The allegation of the Israelites was that, being descendants of prophets, their hearts were the repositories of knowledge, and being already, as it were, full of knowledge, they did not stand in need of more. They are told that it was really their disbelief which became the cause of their estrangement from the good which the Holy Prophet had brought.

***c* (89)** The Jews expected that when the Prophet spoken of in Deuteronomy 18:18 came, he would make them victorious over their disbelieving opponents.

***d* (91-1)** They asserted that they could accept only a revelation granted to an Israelite. The reply to this is that the revelation of the Holy Prophet is the truth verifying what is contained in their own scriptures.

***e* (91-2)** They tried to kill even Israelite prophets, which shows that it was their hard-heartedness which prevented them from accepting the truth, whether that truth was revealed through an Israelite or a non-Israelite prophet.

***f* (93)** They did not utter these words with their tongues, but it is an expression of their condition.

calf into their hearts on account of their disbelief. Say: Evil is what your faith bids you if you are believers.

94 Say: If the abode of the Hereafter with Allah is specially for you to the exclusion of the (other) people, then invoke death if you are truthful. **95**And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have already done, and Allah knows the wrongdoers. **96**And *y*ou will certainly find them the greediest of people for life, (greedier) even than those who set up partners (with Allah). One of them loves to be granted a life of a thousand years, and his being granted a long life will in no way remove him further off from the punishment. And Allah is Seer of what they do.

Section 12: **Their enmity to the Prophet**

97 Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel [a] — for surely he revealed it to *y*our heart by Allah's command, verifying what is (already) before it and a guidance and glad tidings for the believers — **98**whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and His messengers and Gabriel and Michael, then surely Allah is an enemy to disbelievers.[b]

99 And We indeed have revealed to *y*ou clear messages, and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors. **100**Is it that whenever they make a covenant, some of them cast it aside? No, most of them have no faith. **101**And when a messenger from Allah came to them verifying what they (already) have, some of those who were given the Book threw the Book of Allah behind their backs as if they knew nothing.[c]

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a **(97)** The Jews looked upon Gabriel as their enemy because he was considered to be an avenging angel who brought down Divine punishment upon the guilty. But in the Bible, as in the Holy Quran, Gabriel is mentioned as delivering Divine messages to men, as in Daniel 8:16 and in Luke 1:19 and 26.

b **(98)** Man's enmity to Allah signifies opposition to His commandments, and Allah's enmity to man signifies the recompense for his opposition. Note that Allah is here said to be an enemy to those disbelievers only who first make themselves enemies to His prophets, and hence also to the Divine Being Himself.

c **(101)** The covenant referred to in v. 100 as being cast aside, and the throwing of the Book behind their backs, both refer to the Israelites paying no heed to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:18, which was verified by the advent of the Holy Prophet.

102 And they follow what the devils fabricated against the kingdom of Solomon.[a] And Solomon did not disbelieve, but the devils disbelieved, teaching people enchantment.[b] And it was not revealed to the two angels in Babel — Hārūt and Mārūt. Nor did they teach (it to) anyone, so that they should have said, We are only a trial, so do not disbelieve. But they learn from these two (sources) that by which they make a distinction between a man and his wife. And they cannot hurt with it anyone except with Allah's permission. And they learn that which harms them and does not benefit them. And certainly they know that he who buys it has no share of good in the Hereafter.[c] And surely evil is the price for which they have sold their souls; if only they knew! **103**And if they had believed and kept their duty, reward from Allah would certainly have been better; if only they knew!

Section 13: **Previous scriptures are abrogated**

104 O you who believe, do not say *Rā'i-nā* and say *Unẓur-nā,* and listen. And for the disbelievers there is a painful punishment.[d] **105**Neither those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book, nor the idolaters, like that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord. And Allah chooses whom He pleases for His mercy; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace. **106**Whatever message

***a* (102-1)** According to an interpretation accepted by all commentators, by the *devils* here are meant human devils, or devils in the form of people.

***b* (102-2)** The Arabic word *siḥr* ("enchantment") signifies 'the producing of what is false in the form of truth', and 'embellishment by falsification and deceit'.

***c* (102-3)** What the Quran says here is that the Jews, instead of following the word of God, followed certain evil crafts which they falsely attributed to Solomon and to two angels at Babel (Hārūt and Mārūt). Solomon is declared free of any such sinfulness attributed to him, and the story of the two angels is declared to be a fabrication. But the Jews are blamed for learning from these two sources, i.e., by their fabrications against Solomon and the story of the two angels, things by which *they made a distinction between a man and his wife*. These words refer to secret gatherings of the nature of masonic societies, for it is in freemasonry and in no other religious society of the world that women are totally excluded. The words, *they cannot hurt with it anyone except with Allah's permission*, show that by this craft they intended to inflict some injury on the Holy Prophet.

***d* (104)** *Rā'i-nā* is equivalent to *listen to us*, but with a slight change of accent it becomes *ra'ina*, which means *he is foolish.* The word *unẓur-nā,* which means *wait for us* or *grant us a little delay*, is suggested instead, because it cannot be distorted. Morally the injunction is worthy of the highest regard, as it disapproves of the use of words bearing a sinister meaning.

We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it.[a] Do *y*ou not know that Allah is Powerful over all things? **107**Do *y*ou not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that besides Allah you have not any friend or helper? **108**Rather you wish to put questions to your Messenger, as Moses was questioned before. And whoever adopts disbelief instead of faith, he indeed has lost the right direction of the way. **109**Many of the People of the Book wish that they could turn you back into disbelievers after you have believed, out of envy from themselves, after truth has become clear to them. But pardon and forgive, till Allah bring about His command.[b] Surely Allah is Powerful over all things.

110 And keep up prayer and give the due charity. And whatever good you send on ahead for yourselves, you will find it with Allah. Surely Allah is Seer of what you do. **111**And they say: None shall enter the Garden except he who is a Jew, or the Christians.[c] These are their vain desires. Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful. **112**No, whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve.[d]

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a **(106)** The objection of the Jews was: Why was another revelation sent down to Muhammad, and why was a law containing new commandments promulgated? The answer is that if one law (i.e., the Jewish law) was abrogated, one better than it was given through the Holy Prophet. The doctrine that some of the Quranic verses were abrogated by others, though a generally accepted view, is due to a misconception of the words of this verse and is based simply on conjecture. There are no discrepancies in the Quran, and it is want of reflection on it that is responsible for the theory of abrogation.

b **(109)** Note that Muslims are told to pardon and forgive even such enemies.

c **(111)** What is said here may be expanded thus: The Jews say that none shall enter the Garden except a Jew and the Christians say that none shall enter the Garden except the Christians. Both degraded religion to a belief in a set of doctrines, and leading a life of righteousness was not considered as of the essence of religion.

d **(112)** Their assertions that only the Jews and the Christians will be saved are groundless. It is entire submission to God and the doing of good to His creatures that is the true source of salvation, and that is what 'Islam' means according to the Holy Quran. The name *Islam* is derived from *aslama,* meaning 'submission' or 'entering into peace'. See also 3:19 footnote.

Section 14: **Perfect guidance is only in Islam**

113 And the Jews say, The Christians follow nothing (good), and the Christians say, The Jews follow nothing (good), while they recite the (same) Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like what they say.[a] So Allah will judge between them on the day of Resurrection in that in which they differ.

114 And who is more unjust than he who prevents (people) from the mosques of Allah, from His name being remembered in them, and strives to ruin them? (As for) these, it was not proper for them to enter them except in fear. For them is disgrace in this world, and theirs is a grievous punishment in the Hereafter.[b] **115**And Allah's is the East and the West, so whichever way you turn, there is Allah's purpose.[c] Surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.

116 And they say: Allah has taken to Himself a son — glory be to Him! Rather, whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His. All are obedient to Him.[d] **117**Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth! And when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, Be, and it is.[e] **118**And those who have no knowledge say: Why does

***a* (113)** The Jews and the Christians are here blamed for denying all good in each other like ignorant people, despite both being followers of one Book, by which is here meant the Old Testament, which both accepted. As against this, the Quran accepts that there is partial truth in all religions.

***b* (114)** The idolatrous Quraish had turned the Muslims out of the Sacred Mosque at Makkah and the Jews and the Christians were now helping them to annihilate the small Muslim community in Madinah, which practically meant the laying waste of the Sacred Mosque itself. The word *mosques* is used here because the Sacred Mosque was to be the centre of all the mosques of the world. This generalization further shows that the fate of all those who prevented Muslims from worshipping Allah in mosques is predicted here, and the fate of the opponents of the Holy Prophet bears ample testimony to the truth of this prediction.

***c* (115)** These words point clearly to the Divine promise that all obstacles in the path of the Muslims will be removed and victory will follow their footsteps.

***d* (116)** The phrase "glory be to Him" (*subḥāna-hū*) is always used to declare the freedom of the Divine Being from all imperfections, and is always mentioned in connection with the Christian doctrine that God has a son to show that to attribute a son to the Divine Being is to attribute an imperfection to Him, which is met with in human beings. The doctrine of sonship is mentioned here as being opposed to the religion which requires entire submission to Divine commandments from every person and thus dispenses with the necessity of a conciliator.

***e* (117)** This is the oft-recurring phrase in which Allah's act of the creation

not Allah speak to us or a sign come to us? [a] Even thus said those before them, like what they say. Their hearts are all alike. Indeed We have made the messages clear for a people who are sure. **119**Surely We have sent *y*ou with the Truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner, and *y*ou will not be called upon to answer for the companions of the flaming Fire.

120 And the Jews will not be pleased with *y*ou, nor the Christians, unless *y*ou follow their religion. Say: Surely Allah's guidance — that is the (perfect) guidance. And if *y*ou follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to *y*ou, *y*ou shall have from Allah no friend, nor helper. **121**Those to whom We have given the Book follow it as it ought to be followed.[b] These believe in it. And whoever disbelieves in it, these it is that are the losers.

Section 15: **Covenant with Abraham**

122 O Children of Israel, call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations.[c] **123**And be on your guard against a day when no soul will avail another in the least, neither will any compensation be accepted from it, nor will intercession benefit it, nor will they be helped.

124 And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands he fulfilled them. He said: Surely I will make *y*ou a leader of people.

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and annihilation of things is spoken of in the Holy Quran. It is not meant by this that there is no gradual process in the creation of things. It is, in fact, an answer to those who think that the creation of things by God is dependent on the previous existence of matter and soul and the adaptability of their attributes. The argument given here in the word "Originator" (*badī'*) is that man, who stands in need of matter to make things, also stands in need of a pattern after which to make them, but God stands in need of neither.

a **(118)** The answer to both these demands is contained in v. 119, for *as a bearer of good news* the Holy Prophet told them that if they purified themselves by walking in his footsteps, Allah would speak to them, and *as a warner* he informed them of the coming wrath (the sign which they often demanded) if they persisted in their evil ways.

b **(121)** The Muslims are meant, while the *Book* is the Quran.

c **(122)** The Israelites are three times told in the Holy Quran (see earlier 2:40 and 2:47) that God had made them a great nation but that it was by their own evil deeds and forsaking the ways of righteousness that they were proving themselves unworthy of that greatness. Here they are being addressed the third time and reminded of the covenant which was made with Abraham, the great patriarch in whom the Israelites and the Ishmaelites met.

(Abraham) said: And of my offspring? My covenant does not include the wrongdoers, said He.[a] **125**And when We made the House a resort for people and a (place of) security,[b] and (saying): Take the Place of Abraham for a place of prayer.[c] And We commanded Abraham and Ishmael,[d] saying: Purify My House for those who visit (it) and those who abide (in it) for devotion and those who bow down (and) those who prostrate themselves. **126**And when Abraham said: My Lord, make this a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day. He said: And whoever disbelieves, I shall grant him enjoyment

a **(124)** Abraham was made spiritual leader of people because he was found perfect in fulfilling the Divine commandments. As a spiritual leader of three great nations of the world, that patriarch occupies a unique position. Having discussed at length that a prophet from the Ishmaelites had come in accordance with the prophecies of the Israelite prophets, the Holy Quran now proceeds to show that even the covenant with their great ancestor Abraham necessitated the appearance of a prophet in Arabia. The second part of the verse states that the spiritual leadership of the world was still with Abraham's descendants. The covenant was made, not with Israel but with Abraham, and that therefore the seed of Ishmael and Isaac were equally to be blessed. In fact, as stated further on in 2:125, the covenant was made with both Abraham and Ishmael. The Jewish and Christian contention that the covenant made with Ishmael was simply of a temporal nature is groundless.

b **(125-1)** *Al-Bait* or *The House* is the famous house known by this name to this day, the *Ka'bah*. It is also known as *Bait Allah* or the House of Allah, and is the same as the *Bethel* of the Bible. History bears out these three distinguishing characteristics of the Ka'bah. It exists from the remotest antiquity, it was visited annually by people from the most distant corners of Arabia, and its sacredness was respected by the whole of Arabia.

c **(125-2)** The Ka'bah, the spiritual centre of Islam, was connected with the name of Abraham, and pointed reference to this is made in the mention of *Maqām Ibrāhīm* or the Place of Abraham. It is true that a particular place, a small building supported by six pillars about eight feet high, situated in the Ka'bah, is known by this name, and is incontrovertible evidence of Abraham's connection with Arabia and its spiritual centre. But here really *Maqām Ibrāhīm* stands for the House itself. The injunction to take the Place of Abraham for a place of prayer means that the Ka'bah shall be the Central Mosque of the Muslims. It is called the Place of Abraham because it was Abraham who purified it of the idols and it was Abraham who rebuilt *The House* as stated further on.

d **(125-3)** Ishmael's connection with Arabia is established by the Bible itself, for Kedar (son of Ishmael, Genesis 25:13) stands throughout the writings of the Old Testament for Arabia (Psalms 120:5, Isaiah 42:11 and 60:7). The Arab tradition representing Abraham as coming with Hagar and Ishmael to the place where now Makkah is, is quite independent of the Bible statement, and the facts recorded in the Quran are borne out fully by Arab tradition and the Bible.

for a short while, then I shall drive him to the punishment of the Fire. And it is an evil destination.[a]

127 And when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House: [b] Our Lord, accept from us; surely You are the Hearing, the Knowing. **128**Our Lord, and make us both submissive to You, and (raise) from our offspring a nation submissive to You,[c] and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us (mercifully); surely You are the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful. **129**Our Lord, and raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Your messages and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them. Surely You are the Mighty, the Wise.[d]

Section 16: **The religion of Abraham**

130 And who forsakes the religion of Abraham but he who makes a fool of himself. And certainly We made him pure in this world, and in the Hereafter he is surely among the righteous. **131**When his Lord said to him, Submit, he said: I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds. **132**And the same did Abraham command his sons, and (so did) Jacob: My sons, surely Allah has chosen for you (this) religion, so do not die except as submitting ones. **133**Or were you witnesses when death visited Jacob, when he said to his sons: What will you serve after me? They said: We shall serve *y*our God

***a* (126)** Abraham, when settling Hagar and Ishmael near the Sacred House, which was already there, laid the foundations of the city of Makkah there. While Abraham prayed for provisions of life for the righteous only, God's acceptance of the prayer included the wicked of that city as well (see 28:57).

***b* (127)** Abraham and Ishmael rebuilt the Ka'bah, which was already there; see 14:37.

***c* (128)** The word translated as *submissive* is *Muslim* in the original. A Muslim is so called because he surrenders himself to the will of God or because he is secure from the slavery of the devil or because he enters into peace. Though all prophets were Muslims but only the followers of the Prophet Muhammad are known as a Muslim nation. At the time when these verses were revealed, there existed only a few Muslims in Madinah, and reference to a Muslim nation was still prophetical.

***d* (129)** The Messenger had appeared but the great task of teaching the Book and the Wisdom to the progeny of Ishmael, the Arabs, and the still greater task of purifying them of evil, had yet to be performed, and its mention at this time was therefore prophetical. The more one ponders on the unique transformation brought about by the Holy Prophet in Arabia, and through Arabia in the world, the more one's head bows before the grandeur of this prophecy.

and the God of *y*our fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, one God only, and to Him do we submit. **134**Those are a people that have passed away; for them is what they earned and for you what you earn; and you will not be asked of what they did.

135 And they say: Be Jews or Christians, you will be on the right course. Say: Rather, (we follow) the religion of Abraham, the upright one,[a] and he was not of those who set up partners (with Allah). **136**Say: We believe in Allah and (in) what has been revealed to us, and (in) what was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) what was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) what was given to the prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them and to Him we submit.[b] **137**So if they believe as you believe, they are indeed on the right course; and if they turn back, then they are only in opposition. But Allah will be sufficient for *y*ou against them; and He is the Hearing, the Knowing. **138**(We take) Allah's colour, and who is better than Allah at colouring, and we are His worshippers.[c] **139**Say: Do you dispute with us about Allah, and He is our Lord and your Lord, and for us are our deeds and for you your deeds;[d] and

***a* (135)** The word *ḥanīf* or "upright" is often mentioned in connection with the name of Abraham and the Holy Prophet, and his followers are also enjoined to be *ḥanīf*. Muslims are enjoined to remain firm in the right state, and thus to be the true representatives of the Abrahamic faith in the world. It is for this reason that the word *ḥanīf* is used here in opposition to the attitude of both the Jews and the Christians.

***b* (136)** This shows the cosmopolitan nature of a Muslim's belief. Not only is belief in the great prophets of Israel an article of faith with a Muslim, but the words *what was given to the prophets from their Lord* make the Muslim conception of belief in prophets as wide as the world. And it should be noted that this broad conception was promulgated at a time when the Jews and the Christians were exerting themselves to the utmost against the new faith.

***c* (138)** The religion of Islam is called Allah's *colour* because God is uppermost in a Muslim's ideas, and because his views are as broad as humanity. This particular word has also been adopted here as a hint to Christians that baptism of water does not effect any change in a person. It is the baptism of the broad principle of faith, accepting the prophets of all nations, that brings about change in the mentality of man. It is through this baptism that the new birth is received, because it opens the mind for the reception of all truth, and inspires it with love and reverence for all good people.

***d* (139)** A Muslim's conception of Allah is very broad. It includes all that is best in all other religions, but is free from the limitations they put. Therefore no

we are sincere to Him? **140**Or do you say that Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: Do you know better or Allah? [a] And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah? And Allah is not heedless of what you do. **141**Those are a people that have passed away; and for them is what they earned and for you what you earn; and you will not be asked concerning what they did.

Section 17: **The Ka'bah as the Spiritual Centre**

Part 2

142 The fools among the people will say: What has turned them from their *qiblah* which they had? Say: The East and the West belong only to Allah; He guides whom He pleases to the right path. [b] **143**And thus We have made you an exalted nation [c] that you may be the bearers of witness to the people and (that) the Messenger may

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one who is true to his religion can dispute the Muslim conception of the Divine Being. Moreover, every religion of the world limits the spiritual sustenance of God to one nation or one country. Not so Islam, which says that the truth was revealed to every nation. Every nation thus accepts partial truth, only that part of the truth which was revealed to it, but Islam accepts the whole truth.

a **(140)** The Jewish claim was that only acceptance of the Jewish law could save man, and the Christians claimed that none could be saved unless he accepted the atonement of Jesus. They are told that their ancestors who were prophets were the followers of neither the one nor the other. Islam was, in fact, a reversion to the simple faith of sincerity, the faith of Abraham and his immediate followers and descendants.

b **(142)** *Qiblah* means *the direction* or *point towards which one turns his face*. In its religious usage it means the direction towards which a person turns his face when saying his prayers, and the *qiblah* is thus the Spiritual Centre of a people. The change here referred to is the change which took place at Madinah about sixteen months after the Prophet's flight to that city. While the Holy Prophet was at Makkah among the idolaters, he used to pray with his face to the Holy Temple at Jerusalem, but when he came to Madinah, where the Jewish element was strong and powerful, he was directed by Divine Revelation to turn his face to the Ka'bah as his *qiblah*. If Abraham's seed was to be blessed in Ishmael's progeny, it was necessary that the new Spiritual Centre should be the house purified by Abraham and Ishmael, the First House appointed for mankind, the temple at Jerusalem being only the spiritual centre of the Israelites.

c **(143-1)** The word *wasaṭ* ("exalted") signifies *the middle part of anything*; and therefore, as being removed from either extreme, it signifies *the best part of a thing*. The commentators explain *wasaṭ* as meaning *equitable* and *exalted*. By making the Ka'bah their *qiblah*, Allah had made it known that they were the people, the Muslim nation, for whom Abraham had prayed (v. 128), and therefore they were the inheritors of all those Divine blessings which had been promised to the seed of Abraham.

be a bearer of witness to you.[a] And We did not make that which *y*ou would have to be the *qiblah*[b] but that We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels. And it was indeed a hard test except for those whom Allah has guided. Nor was Allah going to make your faith to be fruitless. Surely Allah is Compassionate, Merciful, to the people. **144**Indeed We see the turning of *y*our face to heaven, so We shall surely make *y*ou master of the *qiblah* which *y*ou like;[c] turn then *y*our face towards the Sacred Mosque. And wherever you are, turn your faces towards it. And those who have been given the Book certainly know that it is the truth from their Lord.[d] And Allah is not heedless of what they do.

145 And even if *y*ou should bring to those who have been given the Book every sign they would not follow *y*our *qiblah,* nor can *y*ou be a follower of their *qiblah,* neither are they the followers of each other's *qiblah.*[e] And if *y*ou should follow their desires after the

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***a* (143-2)** The bearers of witness are the persons who carry knowledge to others, bearing testimony to its truth in their own persons. Some commentators explain the word *shahīd* ("bearer of witness") as meaning *a purifier*. But it also means *an Imam* or *a leader*, and the significance is that just as the Prophet delivered the message of truth to the Muslims and was their purifier and leader, the role of the Muslim community was to deliver the message of truth to the whole of humanity and to be its purifiers and leaders.

***b* (143-3)** The words "that which you would have to be the *qiblah*" mean *on which you had firmly set your heart that it should be your qiblah*. It thus appears that the Prophet longed that the Ka‘bah should be his *qiblah*, yet he did not take any step until he had received the Divine Revelation. If his revelations had been the outcome of his own desires he would not have waited for sixteen months for a revelation from on High to change the *qiblah*.

***c* (144-1)** The Holy Prophet is here told that the Ka‘bah will not remain an idol temple, as he will soon be master of it, and idolatry will forever be swept off from the new Spiritual Centre of the world.

***d* (144-2)** The truth of the Prophet was manifest so far as the Jews and the Christians were concerned. There was a clear prophecy for the appearance of a Prophet who was to be the like of Moses; see Deut. 18:15–18. They also knew that God had promised to bless Ishmael, but that no prophet had up to this time appeared from among the Ishmaelites. They also knew that Ishmael was left in Arabia, and they identified his son, Kedar, with the Arabs. Isaiah 21:13 speaks in clear words of a prophecy about "Arabia" and of the Prophet's Flight. The *Bait Allah* (Ka‘bah) was the only *Beit-el* that the world knew.

***e* (145)** Every sign of the Prophet's truth had been given to them already but their hearts were so hardened that they did not pay any attention to the clearest

knowledge that has come to *y*ou, then *y*ou would indeed be from among the wrongdoers. **146**Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons,[a] but some of them surely conceal the truth while they know. **147**The truth is from *y*our Lord, so do not be from among the doubters.[b]

Section 18: **The Ka'bah as the Spiritual Centre**

148 And everyone has a goal to which he turns (himself), so vie with one another in good works.[c] Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together. Surely Allah is Powerful over all things. **149**And from whatsoever place *y*ou come forth, turn *y*our face towards the Sacred Mosque.[d] And surely it is the truth from

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signs. But they were not agreed even among themselves. Although the Jews and Christians both looked to the temple at Jerusalem as their central temple, they were not agreed upon it as their *qiblah* or Spiritual Centre.

a **(146)** All the prophets of Abraham's seed had hitherto appeared among the Children of Israel, and hence *as they know their sons* is equivalent to *as they know the Israelite prophets*, the significance being that the Israelites or the Jews recognized the Prophet who appeared among the Children of Ishmael, as they recognized the prophets who appeared among the Children of Israel.

b **(147)** It is the reader who is addressed here.

c **(148)** In making the Ka'bah the Spiritual Centre the Muslims are told that their goal, as a nation, is to lead the world on to the greatest good. Their race is not a race for material benefits, riches or power, but a race for the attainment of good and for the spread of good. Hence they must vie with one another in doing good. In the words that follow — wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together — they are told that they will be spread far and wide in the world, yet their goal must be one. The outward unity of the *qiblah* stands for their *unity of purpose*, and it forms the basis on which rests the brotherhood of Islam; hence the saying of the Prophet: "Do not call those who follow your *qiblah* unbelievers."

d **(149)** The Ka'bah has never been supposed by any Muslim to possess any Divine attribute. The Muslims honour the Ka'bah because it is their Spiritual Centre; they do not worship it. It should also be borne in mind that the famous Black Stone was not one of the Arab idols, nor can the kissing of it in performing the pilgrimage be looked upon as a remnant of idolatry. That Stone stands only as a monument: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (Psalms, 118:22). Ishmael was looked upon as rejected, and the covenant was considered to have been made with the children of Isaac, yet it was that rejected stone, for which the Black Stone at the Ka'bah stands as a monument, that was to become "the chief cornerstone". Jesus Christ made this clear in the parable of the husbandmen, when he plainly told the Israelites that the vineyard (i.e., the kingdom of God) would be taken away from them and given to

*y*our Lord. And Allah is not heedless of what you do. **150**And from whatsoever place *y*ou come forth, turn *y*our face towards the Sacred Mosque. And wherever you are, turn your faces towards it, so that people may have no plea against you except such of them as are unjust — so do not fear them and fear Me — and that I may complete My favour to you and that you may go aright.[a] **151**Even as We have sent among you a Messenger from among you, who recites to you Our messages and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the Wisdom and teaches you what you did not know.[b] **152**Therefore glorify Me, I will make you eminent,[c] and give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me.

Section 19: **Hard trials necessary to establish Truth**

153 O you who believe, seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allah is with the patient. **154**And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Rather, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive.[d] **155**And We shall certainly try you with

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"other husbandmen", i.e., to a non-Israelite people, giving indication of that people in the words: "Have you never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone?" (Matthew, 21:42). And he added: "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matthew, 21:43), thus showing that he was referring to a rejected nation which was to become the corner-stone of the Divine kingdom.

a **(150)** By *completing of favour* is meant the bestowing of spiritual favours on the Muslims. In the next verse they are told that they have been raised to carry the Divine message to other people and to purify them and teach them the Book and the Wisdom. If that message was not conveyed to other people they had a plea against the Muslims that they had not conveyed the Truth to them. The turning of the face to the Sacred Mosque is thus equivalent to proclaiming the Truth which had its origin in the Ka'bah to the whole world. The Ka'bah was the house rebuilt by Abraham and Ishmael, and with prophethood now being transferred to the descendants of Ishmael, the Spiritual Centre had necessarily to be changed. The Ka'bah was moreover the first Spiritual Centre of the world (3:96), and it was in the fitness of things that it should be the last Spiritual Centre of the whole world.

b **(151)** The reference is to Abraham's prayer in v. 129. The functions of the Promised Prophet there are exactly the same as here.

c **(152)** These words may be translated either as *remember Me, I will remember you* or as *glorify Me, I will make you eminent*, for the word *dhikr* carries either significance, *remembrance* or *honouring*. Adopting either significance, what is stated here is that if the Muslims keep God in the forefront of their programme, they will be made great as a nation.

d **(154)** The sacrifice of life which must be undertaken in the cause of Truth

something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give good news to the patient,[a] **156**who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: Surely we are Allah's, and to Him we shall return.[b] **157**Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord; and those are the followers of the right course.

158 The Safa and the Marwah are truly among the signs of Allah;[c] so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or pays a visit (to it), there is no blame on him if he goes round them. And whoever does good spontaneously — surely Allah is Bountiful in rewarding, Knowing. **159**Those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed after We have made it clear in the Book for people, these it is whom Allah curses, and those who curse, curse them (too).[d] **160**Except those who repent and amend

is hinted at in this passage. The words rendered literally as *in Allah's way* or *in the cause of Allah*, frequently occurring in the Holy Quran, signify the cause of Truth. A Christian translator's comment that the words *in the way of Allah* mean "war undertaken against unbelievers for the propagation of Islam" is baseless. Carrying the message of Islam to non-Muslims is indeed the duty of a Muslim, and anyone engaged in this work is undoubtedly working *in the way of Allah*, but that a Muslim was required to carry the message of God at the point of the sword is no more than a myth.

a **(155)** The Muslims had already made great sacrifices in the cause of Allah. They had left their homes, their near and dear ones and everything they had, behind them at Makkah, and had come to Madinah empty-handed, but they were now told that they would have to make more sacrifices yet. They would have to face fear and hunger and all kinds of losses, even death itself. If they bore all these sufferings with steadfastness, they would have a great future, of which the good news is given to them beforehand. Those who have sacrificed their lives in the cause of Truth gain the life eternal, while the dead are really those who are dead in ignorance.

b **(156)** This is the true expression of a Muslim's resignation under trials: *We are Allah's and to Him we shall return*. He resigns himself to the will of God so thoroughly that no trial or misfortune can disturb the course of his life, which has a much higher goal before it than mere comfort.

c **(158)** The Safa and the Marwah are two mountains near Makkah. They were the scene of Hagar's running to and fro in quest of water when left alone with Ishmael in the wilderness. These two mountains now serve as two monuments of the reward which patience brought, and it is as a memorial to Hagar's patience that they are now gone round by the pilgrims.

d **(159)** As against those who willingly endure all kinds of sufferings in the cause of truth, the Quran now speaks of people who hide the truth, i.e., they neither act according to it, nor do they carry the message to others. These words convey a warning to the Muslims.

and make manifest (the truth), these it is to whom I turn (mercifully); and I am the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful. **161**Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and people, of all (of them):[a] **162**abiding in it; their punishment shall not be lightened nor shall they be given respite. **163**And your God is one God; there is no God but He! He is the Beneficent, the Merciful.[b]

Section 20: **Unity must prevail**

164 In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which benefits mankind, and the water that Allah sends down from the sky, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between heaven and earth, there are surely signs for a people who understand.[c] **165**Yet there are some people who take for themselves objects of worship besides Allah,[d] whom they love as they should love Allah. And those who believe are stronger in (their) love for Allah.[e] And if only the wrongdoers had

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a **(161)** This verse continues the subject-matter of v. 159, the disbelievers spoken of here being those who hide the truth. The curse of God stands for their estrangement from God, the curse of the angels signifies their loss of all incentive to good and noble deeds, and the curse of people signifies their subjugation to other people.

b **(163)** The mention of Divine Unity is to show that it was for this object that the trials and privations spoken of in this section were to be undergone. The ultimate triumph of Divine Unity is spoken of in the next section.

c **(164)** The unity of God is declared by the whole of nature, and being such a clear doctrine, must no doubt at last prevail over idolatry and polytheism of every kind. Not only did Arabia witness the truth of this at the time of the Holy Prophet, but even today we see that, as man is freed from the trammels of prejudice, he realizes the truth of Divine Unity more and more. The uniformity that is clearly observed in the diversity of nature is constantly appealed to in the Quran as a sign of the Unity of the Maker.

d **(165-1)** The objects of worship here referred to may include idols, but the reference is apparently to the leaders who lead their followers into evil. This is made plain by the verses that follow, where "those who were followed", i.e., *the leaders*, renounce those who followed them.

e **(165-2)** While Allah's love for His creatures is the ever-recurring theme expressed in the Quran, the believer's love for Allah, or absolute submission to the Divine Being, is here declared to be stronger than all other ties of love and friendship, including that which unites a man to his idols or other false deities.

seen, when they see the punishment, that power is wholly Allah's, and that Allah is Severe in punishing! **166**When those who were followed renounce those who followed (them), and they see the punishment and their ties are cut apart. **167**And those who followed will say: If only we could return, we would renounce them as they have renounced us. Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them, and they will not escape from the Fire.[a]

Section 21: **Prohibited foods**

168 O people, eat the lawful and good things from what is in the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the devil. Surely he is an open enemy to you.[b] **169**He commands you only (to commit) evil and indecency, and that you speak against Allah what you do not know.

170 And when it is said to them, Follow what Allah has revealed, they say: But we follow that (path) upon which we found our fathers. What! Even though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way. **171**And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears no more than a call and a cry. Deaf, dumb, blind, so they have no sense.[c] **172**O you who believe, eat of the good things that We have provided you with, and give thanks to Allah if He it is Whom you serve.[d] **173**He has forbidden you only what dies of itself, and blood,

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a **(167)** The mutual renouncement of the leaders and their followers takes place sometimes in this very life. It should also be noted that it is the *intense regret* for the evil deeds done, here described as being the *Fire*, from which there is no escape.

b **(168)** The fundamental principle of faith, Divine Unity, having been discussed, certain secondary rules and regulations are now considered, and among these the subject of prohibited foods is introduced first with a twofold object. Firstly, only lawful and good things should be eaten. Lawful things are not only those which the law has not declared to be forbidden, but even unforbidden things become unlawful if they are acquired unlawfully, by theft, cheating, etc. Secondly, by adding the injunction *do not follow the footsteps of the devil*, the Quran recognizes some sort of relation between the physical and the spiritual conditions of man.

c **(171)** The Prophet is likened to the crier who calls out, but the disbelievers are deaf to reason, and are like cattle which only hear the cry of the driver, but do not understand the meaning of what he says. This is in accordance with what is said in the previous verse.

d **(172)** The injunction to eat of the *good things* is directed against the use of things which are injurious to health, though they may not be forbidden by law.

and the flesh of swine,[a] and that on which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked.[b] Then whoever is driven by necessity, not desiring, nor exceeding the limit, no sin is upon him. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

174 Those who conceal anything of the Book that Allah has revealed and take for it a small price, they eat nothing but fire into their bellies,[c] and Allah will not speak to them on the day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them; and for them is a painful punishment. **175**Those are they who buy error for guidance and punishment for forgiveness; how bold they are to challenge the Fire! **176**That is because Allah has revealed the Book with truth. And surely those who disagree about the Book go far in opposition.[d]

Section 22: **Retaliation and bequests**

177 It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West,[e] but righteous is the one who believes in Allah,

***a* (173-1)** The Jews held the swine in great detestation, and the mention of the animal in the Gospels shows that Jesus Christ held it in equal abhorrence, which proves that he too regarded the animal as impure. Neither does he appear to have broken the Jewish law in this respect.

***b* (173-2)** The words *that over which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked* are said by commentators to refer to animals slaughtered by the worshippers of idols, which they used to slaughter as offerings to their idols or to those over which the name of an idol is invoked at the time of its slaughter. But the statement made in the Quran is general, and the invocation of any name other than that of Allah makes the animal slaughtered unlawful.

***c* (174)** The prohibition to eat certain impure or injurious foods is followed by a warning against the *eating of fire*. Caution is always given lest too much stress should be laid upon the outward ceremonial of the law. Even more dangerous than the prohibited foods is the eating of fire, which means the concealing of what is revealed in the Book. The concealment in this case means *not acting upon the teaching of the Book.* The Muslims are warned of the danger of being strict in external acts of purity while neglecting internal purity.

***d* (176)** By *those who disagree about the Book* are meant people who accept one part of the Divine Revelation and reject the other, as the Jews and the Christians did, the Book in this case standing for the whole of the Divine Revelation which is accepted by the Muslims only. Or, the Book stands for the Quran, and their disagreement means their rejection of it.

***e* (177-1)** A warning is given to the Muslims that they should not fall into the error into which the previous people fell, who sacrificed the spirit of religion for the outward ceremonial. The essence of religion is faith in God and benevolence towards people. The turning of the face to the East and the West refers to

and the Last Day, and the angels [a] and the Book and the prophets,[b] and gives away wealth out of love for Him [c] to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the traveller and to those who ask and to set slaves free[d] and keeps up prayer and gives the due charity; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise,[e] and the patient in distress and affliction and in the time of conflict. These are they who are truthful; and these are they who keep their duty.

178 O you who believe, retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain: the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female.[f] But if remission is made to one by

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the outward act of facing a certain direction when saying prayers. This, though necessary, should not be taken as the real object of prayer, which is in fact meant to enable one to hold communion with the Divine Being and to imbue oneself with Divine morals as explained further on.

a **(177-2)** A belief in angels is one of the basic principles of Islam. This belief is accepted generally in all monotheistic religions. As in the case of all other principles of faith, Islam has pointed out a certain significance underlying the belief in angels. There are two attractions placed in humans — the attraction to good or to rise up to higher spheres of virtue, and the attraction to evil or to stoop down to a kind of low, bestial life. If we respond to the attraction for good we are following the angel or the Holy Spirit, and if we respond to the attraction for evil we are following the devil. Our belief in angels carries, therefore, the significance that whenever we feel a tendency to do good we should at once obey that call. It does not simply mean that we should admit that there are angels. This is clear from the fact that not only are we not required to believe in devils, whose existence is as certain as that of the angels, but we are plainly told that we should disbelieve in the devils (2:256). As a disbelief in the devil means that we should repel the attraction for evil, so a belief in angels means that we should follow the inviter to good.

b **(177-3)** The Book stands for Divine Revelation in general or the scriptures of all the prophets.

c **(177-4)** The love of Allah is here, as in many other places in the Quran, stated to be the true incentive to all deeds of righteousness.

d **(177-5)** The basis was thus laid down for the abolition of slavery.

e **(177-6)** The performance of promise on the part of individuals as well as of nations is one of the first essentials of the welfare of humanity, and hence the stress laid upon it by the Quran. Faithlessness to treaties and pledges on the part of nations has wrought the greatest havoc on humanity. Just as no society can prosper until its individual members are true to their mutual agreements and promises to each other, so humanity at large can never have peace unless the nations are true to their agreements.

f **(178-1)** The Jewish law of retaliation is greatly modified in Islam, being limited only to cases of murder, while among the Jews it extended to all cases of

his (aggrieved) brother, prosecution (for blood-money) should be according to usage, and payment to him in a good manner.[a] This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. Whoever exceeds the limit after this, will have a painful punishment. **179**And there is life for you in retaliation, you people of understanding, that you may guard yourselves.

180 It is prescribed for you, when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth for parents and near relatives, to make a bequest in a kindly manner; it is incumbent upon the dutiful.[b] **181**Then whoever changes it after he has heard it, the sin of it is only upon those who change it. Surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing. **182**But if one fears a wrong or a sinful course on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Section 23: **Fasting**

183 O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil.[c]

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grievous hurt. The words *retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain* mean that the murderer should be put to death. The pre-Islamic Arabs used in certain cases to insist, when the person killed was of noble descent, upon the execution of others besides the murderer. The Quran abolished this custom.

***a* (178-2)** There may be circumstances which alleviate the guilt. In such cases the murderer may be made to pay a fine to the relatives of the murdered person. Such money is called *diyat* or *blood-money*. A comparison with 4:92 makes it clear that when homicide is not intentional, blood-money may be paid.

***b* (180)** Some commentators hold the opinion that the direction here, to make a bequest, is abrogated by 4:11 which fixes the shares of the heirs of the deceased person. However, that verse clearly recognizes the validity of any bequest that may have been made. In practice, however, traced to the Prophet himself, the right to make a will has been subject to the condition that not more than a third of the property shall be bequeathed, and that those who take as heirs shall not be entitled to take under the bequest. Hence, this verse really speaks of bequests made for charitable purposes and not of bequests to heirs.

***c* (183)** Fasting is a religious institution almost as universal as prayer, and in Islam it is one of the five fundamental practical ordinances. “Fasting has in all ages and among all nations been an exercise much in use in times of mourning, sorrow and affliction” (Cruden’s Bible Concordance). But Islam has introduced quite a new meaning into the institution of fasting. It becomes an institution for the improvement of the moral and spiritual condition of man. This is plainly stated in the concluding words: *so that you may guard against evil*. The object is

[184]For a certain number of days. But whoever among you is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. And those who find it extremely hard may effect redemption by feeding a poor one.[a] So whoever does good spontaneously, it is better for him; and that you fast is better for you if you know.

185 The month of Ramadan[b] is that in which the Quran was revealed,[c] a guidance to people and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion.[d] So whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast in it, and whoever is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you, and (He desires) that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for having guided you and that you may give thanks.

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that man may learn how he can shun evil, and hence fasting in Islam does not mean simply abstaining from food, but from every kind of evil. Abstention from food is only a step to make a person realize that if he can, in obedience to Divine injunctions, abstain from that which is otherwise lawful, how much more necessary is it to abstain from the evil ways which are forbidden by God.

a **(184)** The first two classes exempted are: (a) those who are sick and (b) those journeying. Both are required to fast afterwards when sickness or journey ends. What is sickness or journey every person can determine for himself. Someone who needs a medicine or is unable to bear the hardship of hunger or thirst should not fast. In journeying again, whether one can easily fast or not is the determining factor. The third exception is in the case of those who find it extremely difficult to bear the hardship of fasting. Such people may effect a redemption by giving food daily to a poor person. This exception covers the case of pregnant women, women who are breastfeeding infants, old people who cannot bear fasting; also such sick people whose sickness is prolonged and such people whose journey extends over the whole year.

b **(185-1)** The revelation of the Quran commenced in the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Arabian year; hence, the month of Ramadan is particularly spoken of as being the month in which the Quran was revealed.

c **(185-2)** Elsewhere we are told that it was revealed on the *Lailat al-Qadr* or *the Night of Majesty* (97:1), a well-known night in the month of Ramadan, being the 25th or 27th or 29th night of that month. By the revelation of the Quran in the month of Ramadan is therefore meant the commencement of its revelation. The month of Ramadan is thus a memorial of the revelation of the Quran.

d **(185-3)** Firstly, the Quran is a "guidance" for all people, and therefore it contains teachings suitable and sufficient for all people in all countries and ages. Secondly, it contains "clear proofs" to demonstrate the truth of what it asserts. Thirdly, it contains arguments which afford a "criterion" (Arabic: *furqān*), separating truth from falsehood.

186 And when My servants ask *y*ou concerning Me, surely I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me, so they should hear My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way.[a]

187 It is made lawful for you to have intercourse with your wives on the night of the fast. They are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them.[b] Allah knows that you acted unjustly to yourselves, so He turned to you in mercy and removed (the burden) from you.[c] So now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has ordained for you, and eat and drink until the whiteness of the day becomes distinct from the blackness of the night at dawn, then complete the fast till nightfall,[d] and do not touch them while you keep to the mosques.[e] These are the limits of Allah, so do not go near them. Thus does Allah make clear His messages for people that they may keep their duty. **188**And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek to gain access

***a* (186)** This verse speaks of the nearness of God to man and of the acceptance of his prayers to show that fasting is a spiritual exercise and it brings about spiritual awakening in man. Fasting undoubtedly awakens a living consciousness of the existence of God in the mind. This is the idea underlying the words: "When My servants ask you concerning Me." A real and earnest search for God is raised in the mind through fasting. "I am near" is the reply to that inner search. And then follow the words: "I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me". *God is near*, but that consciousness only raises the further desire to get nearer and nearer to Him. For that man calls on God; he prays to Him to draw him closer and closer to Himself. And he is told that God accepts this prayer.

***b* (187-1)** First, the sex instinct is classed with hunger and thirst. It is a natural desire and one could not live without satisfying it. And then in these words — *your wives are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them* — we are told that while satisfying a natural desire, the relation of husband and wife has higher ends in view. They serve as a garment for each other, i.e., they are a means of protection, comfort and even embellishment for each other, and the weakness of one is made up by the strength of the other.

***c* (187-2)** Muslims at first thought that it was illegal to have intercourse with their wives even at night on the days during which they kept fasts. These words made it clear that this was permitted during the nights of fasting as the satisfaction of hunger and thirst was permitted.

***d* (187-3)** In countries where the days are sometimes very long, the time of fasting may be measured in accordance with the length of an ordinary day, or where practicable postpone the fasts to shorter days of about normal length.

***e* (187-4)** Those people are meant who cut themselves off from all worldly connections during the last ten days of Ramadan, passing day and night in the mosques. This practice, known as *I'tikāf,* is voluntary and not obligatory.

thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of (other) people wrongfully while you know.[a]

Section 24: **Fighting in defence**

189 They ask *y*ou about the new moons. Say: They are times appointed for people, and (for) the pilgrimage.[b] And it is not righteousness that you enter houses by their backs, but he is righteous who keeps his duty. And go into houses by their doors;[c] and keep your duty to Allah, that you may be successful.

190 And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you but do not be aggressive. Surely Allah does not love the aggressors.[d] **191** And kill them wherever you find them,[e] and drive them out from where they drove you out, and persecution is worse

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***a* (188)** The command to abstain from illegally taking other people's property is a fitting sequel to the injunction relating to fasting, for by fasting a person abstains from using what he has a legal right to, simply in obedience to Divine commandments. Fasting, in fact, enables one to control his passions, and the more the passions are mastered, the less the greed for illegal acquisition.

***b* (189-1)** The reference in "new moons" is in particular to the four months of the year which the Arabs observed as sacred (the 11th, 12th, 1st and 7th). All hostilities ceased and peace was established throughout the land; thus trade was carried on without molestation. The pilgrimage to Makkah was also performed during these months.

***c* (189-2)** Entering by the back indicates turning aside from the right course, while entering by the doors signifies sticking to the right course. This also refers to a superstitious custom of pre-Islamic Arabs, whereby when one of them failed to attain his objective he would not enter his house by the door but by the back.

***d* (190)** This is one of the earliest revelations permitting Muslims to fight. It is remarkable that *fighting in the way of Allah* is here expressly limited to *fighting in defence*. Muslims were required to fight *in the way of Allah*, but they could fight only against those who waged war on them. Exactly the same limitation is placed on what was in all probability the first revelation permitting fighting: "Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made because they are oppressed" (22:39). Muslims were allowed to take up the sword only as a measure of self-defence. The enemies of Islam, being unable to suppress Islam by persecution, and seeing that Islam was now safe at Madinah and gaining strength, took up the sword to annihilate it. No course was left for the Muslims but either to be swept off the face of the earth or take up the sword in defence against an enemy which was immensely stronger.

***e* (191-1)** The words *kill them* refer to those with whom fighting is enjoined in the previous verse, who waged war upon the Muslims.

than slaughter.[a] And do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you in it; so if they fight you (in it), kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers. **192**But if they cease, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[b] **193**And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is only for Allah.[c] But if they cease, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors. **194**The sacred month for the sacred month, and retaliation (is allowed) in sacred things.[d] Whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict injury on him according to the injury he has inflicted on you and keep your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is with those who keep their duty. **195**And spend in the way of Allah and do not cast yourselves to destruction with your own hands and do good (to others). Surely Allah loves the doers of good.

196 And accomplish the pilgrimage and the visit for Allah. But if you are prevented, (send) whatever offering is easy to obtain; and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its destination. Then whoever among you is sick or has an ailment of the head, (he may effect) a compensation by fasting or (giving in) charity or sacrificing. And when you are secure, whoever profits by combining the visit with the pilgrimage (should take) whatever offering is easy to obtain. But he who cannot find (an offering) should fast for three days during the pilgrimage and for seven days when you return. These are ten (days) complete. This is for him

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a **(191-2)** The word translated as "persecution" is *fitna*. Ibn Umar explained the word *fitna* when he said: "And there were very few Muslims [in the beginning], so a man used to be persecuted on account of his religion: they either murdered him or subjected him to tortures until Islam became predominant, then there was no *fitna* " (Bukhari, 65: *Surah* 2, ch. 30, hadith 4514).

b **(192)** Note the clemency of the Islamic fighting injunctions. Muslims were to sheathe their swords if the enemy desisted from fighting.

c **(193)** When persecution ceases, and people are not forced to accept or renounce a religion, then there should be no more fighting. *If they cease* persecution, Muslims are at once to stop fighting against them, and hostilities are not to be continued against any except the aggressors.

d **(194)** This is similar to what is said in v. 191 regarding the Sacred Mosque. The pre-Islamic Arabs observed four months in the year as sacred, in which hostilities ceased and peace was established throughout the land. If the opponents violated the sacred months by attacking the Muslims first in those months, the Muslims were permitted to fight against them in the sacred months. And generally retaliation within the limits of the original act of aggression is permitted in the case of all sacred objects.

whose family is not present in the Sacred Mosque. And keep your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is Severe in retribution.[a]

Section 25: **The Pilgrimage**

197 The months of the pilgrimage are well known; so whoever determines to perform pilgrimage in them, there shall be no immodest speech, nor abusing, nor altercation in the pilgrimage. And whatever good you do, Allah knows it.[b] And make provision for yourselves, the best provision being to keep one's duty. And keep your duty to Me, you people of understanding. **198**It is no sin for you that you seek the bounty of your Lord.[c] So when you press on from Arafat,[d] remember Allah near the Holy Monument,[e] and

***a* (196)** The two subjects of war and pilgrimage are linked because Muslims were free at Madinah to perform all the religious ordinances required by Islam, but they were not free to perform the pilgrimage, their Spiritual Centre, Makkah, being in the possession of their enemies who were at war with them. The "visit" or *'umrah* may be performed at any time, whilst the "pilgrimage" or *ḥajj* can only be performed at a particular time of the year. The pilgrimage represents the last stage in the progress of the spiritual pilgrim. The first requirement of the pilgrimage, *iḥrām*, represents the severance of all worldly connections for the love of God. All costly dresses, in which the inner self is so often mistaken for the outward appearance, are cast off, and the pilgrim has only two seamless wrappers to cover himself. The other important requirement is making circuits round the Ka'bah, called *ṭawāf*, and running between the Safa and the Marwah, called *sa'y*, and both these are external manifestations of that fire of Divine love which has been kindled within the heart, so that like the true lover, the pilgrim makes circuits round the house of his beloved One.

***b* (197)** The pilgrimage represents the final stage of spiritual progress, and hence the pilgrim is told not to speak words which should be a source of annoyance to anybody. Perfect love of God requires perfect peace with fellow beings; hence no offence should be caused to anyone. The doing of good to others is recommended instead in the words *whatever good you do, Allah knows it*.

***c* (198-1)** Seeking the bounty of the Lord here stands for *trading.* What is meant is that there is no harm in seeking an increase of wealth by trading in Makkah in the pilgrimage season.

***d* (198-2)** *'Arafāt* is the place where the pilgrims assemble on the 9th of the month of *Dhu-l-Ḥijjah*, towards the close of the pilgrimage. Here the vast gathering from all countries and nations clad in one dress, with one utterance, *labbaika Allāh-umma labbaika* (here I am, O Allah, in Your Presence), declares the glory of God. The word *'Arafāt* is derived from *'arafa,* meaning *he knew*, or *acquainted himself with*, a thing, and there is undoubtedly a reference in this name to the fact that here people feel truly the august Divine presence.

***e* (198-3)** This is the place known as Muzdalafah, or the ground bordering

remember Him as He has guided you, though before that you were certainly in error. **199**Then hasten on from where the people hasten on, and ask the forgiveness of Allah.[a] Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

200 And when you have performed your devotions, extol Allah as you extolled your fathers, rather a stronger extolling.[b] But there are some people who say: Our Lord, give us (good) in the world. And for such there is no portion in the Hereafter. **201**And there are some among them who say: Our Lord, grant us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of the Fire.[c] **202**For those there is a portion on account of what they have earned. And Allah is Swift in reckoning. **203**And remember Allah during the appointed days. Then whoever hastens off in two days, it is no sin for him; and whoever stays behind, it is no sin for him, for one who keeps his duty.[d] And keep your duty to Allah, and know that you will be gathered together to Him.

204 And among people is he whose speech about the life of this world pleases *y*ou, and he calls Allah to witness as to what is in his heart, yet he is the most violent of adversaries. **205**And when he holds authority, he makes effort in the land to cause mischief in it and destroy crops and offspring; and Allah does not love mischief. **206**And when it is said to him, Be careful of *y*our duty to Allah, pride carries him off to sin — so hell is sufficient for him.

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on it, where the pilgrims stop for the night after their return from Arafat on the evening of the 9th *Dhu-l-Ḥijjah*.

a **(199)** The Quraish and the Kananah used to stay at Muzdalafah, thinking it beneath their dignity to join other pilgrims in going to the plain of Arafat. As all distinctions were levelled by Islam, they were told to consider themselves on a par with others.

b **(200)** In pre-Islamic times people used to boast among themselves of the greatness of their fathers after they had performed the pilgrimage. The Quran forbade people to boast of the greatness of their fathers, and told them to celebrate the praise of Allah instead.

c **(201)** This is the true Muslim's prayer. As he is taught to pray for both the good of this life and that of the next, so he should exert himself to attain good in this life as well as in the Hereafter.

d **(203)** The appointed days are the three days following the day of Sacrifice, and are called the days of *Tashrīq*. Ordinarily pilgrims leave on the afternoon of the last day of *Tashrīq* days, but they are allowed to leave on the evening of the second day.

And certainly evil is the resting-place.[a] **207**And among people is he who sells himself to seek the pleasure of Allah. And Allah is Compassionate to the servants.

208 O you who believe, enter into complete peace and do not follow the footsteps of the devil. Surely he is your open enemy. **209**But if you slip after clear arguments have come to you, then know that Allah is Mighty, Wise. **210**They only wait that Allah should come to them in the shadows of the clouds with angels, and the matter has (already) been decided. And to Allah are (all) matters returned.[b]

Section 26: **Trials and tribulations**

211 Ask the Children of Israel how many a clear sign We gave them! And whoever changes the favour of Allah after it has come to him, then surely Allah is Severe in retribution.[c] **212**The life of this world is made to seem attractive to those who disbelieve, and they mock those who believe. And those who keep their duty will be above them on the day of Resurrection. And Allah gives to whom He pleases without measure.

213 Mankind is a single nation.[d] So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed.[e] And none but the very people who were given

a **(206)** *Mihād* ("resting-place") means a *cradle*, and also *what a man has prepared for himself*. Hell is a thing which a man *prepares for himself;* and for a new spiritual growth in the Hereafter in the case of those who retarded that growth in this world, it serves the same purpose as the *cradle* for a child. Elsewhere hell is called an *umm* or *mother* (101:9).

b **(210)** The coming of Allah stands for the coming of the threatened punishment for those who wanted to annihilate Islam. *The matter has already been decided*, because it was repeatedly made clear in the earliest revelations that all opposition to Islam would perish.

c **(211)** *The favour of Allah* is the *Quran* and its *change* implies its *rejection*.

d **(213-1)** The oneness of humanity is a truth on which the Quran lays the greatest stress. They are sometimes told that they have all been "created of a single being" (4:1); again, that they are all descended from the same parents (49:13); still again, that they are, as it were, dwellers in one home, having the same earth as a resting-place and the same heaven as a canopy (2:22). Hence also the conclusion that prophets were raised among all nations, which is conveyed in the words that follow.

e **(213-2)** As all people are a single nation (*umma*), God, too, has been

it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, envying one another.[a] So Allah has guided by His will those who believe to the truth about which they differed.[b] And Allah guides whom He pleases to the right path. **214**Or do you think that you will enter the Garden, while there has not yet come upon you the like of what befell those who have passed away before you? Distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently, so that the Messenger and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allah come? Now surely the help of Allah is near![c]

215 They ask *y*ou as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever wealth you spend, it is for the parents and the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the traveller. And whatever good you do, Allah surely is Knower of it.

216 Fighting is ordained for you, though it is disliked by you; and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is harmful for you; and Allah knows while you do not know.[d]

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revealing Himself to all. This Law of Divine Revelation has, we are told, found expression through prophets, to every one of whom a revealed Book was given to show them the right way.

***a* (213-3)** The universal law expressed here is that corruption followed guidance. As time passed on, the very people to whom the Book was given so that they might follow it, went against it. Thus, though a prophet had been raised in every nation, yet every nation had forsaken the right way. Differences again arose which necessitated the advent of another prophet. Hence it was necessary to raise a prophet who should show the right way to all nations, and this is what is stated in the words that follow.

***b* (213-4)** Allah's guiding those who believe refers to the raising of the Prophet Muhammad, through whom Muslims were guided to the right path, to the truth, regarding which differences had arisen among all people. If a prophet was needed by every nation to settle its own differences, one was surely now needed to settle the differences of the various nations. Thus among the different national religions of the world, Islam occupies the position of an international religion.

***c* (214)** This verse inculcates faith and perseverance under the hardest trials and is an indication of the Prophet's own unequalled endurance and faith. It refers not only to the great trials and hardships which Muslims had already suffered at Makkah and the privations which they had to undergo in their exile, but more particularly to the hardships which were yet in store for them, and which they could clearly see in the massing of all forces that could be used to annihilate them.

***d* (216)** Muslims were too weak to carry on the struggle against the mighty forces that were bent upon their destruction, and they disliked the war. A picture

Section 27: **Miscellaneous questions**

217 They ask *y*ou about fighting in the sacred month. Say: Fighting in it is a grave (offence). And hindering (people) from Allah's way, and denying Him, and (from) the Sacred Mosque and turning its people out of it, are still graver with Allah; and persecution is graver than slaughter. And they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can.[a] And whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever — these it is whose deeds are fruitless in this world and the Hereafter.[b] And they are the companions of the Fire: in it they will abide. **218**Those who believed and those who fled (their homes) and strove hard in Allah's way — these surely hope for the mercy of Allah. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

219 They ask *y*ou about intoxicants[c] and games of chance. Say: In both of them is a great sin and (some) advantage for people,

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of distresses and afflictions to which the few converts to Islam were subjected is drawn in v. 214. They were few in numbers, poor, exiled, and distressed, yet it became inevitable that they should fight in self-defence or they would be destroyed. It was their utter weakness and the enormous disparity of numbers that made them dislike the fighting.

***a* (217-1)** The unbelievers took up the sword to force the Muslims back into unbelief and they were determined to carry on the war until they gained this end. Note the words *they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can*, which disprove the false allegation that the Muslims started war to convert the unbelievers by force.

***b* (217-2)** The persons spoken of here are the apostates. A wrong impression exists that those who apostatize from Islam are to be put to death. This is entirely untrue. What is stated here is that the opponents of Islam exerted themselves to their utmost to turn back the Muslims from their faith by their cruel persecutions, and therefore if a Muslim actually went back to unbelief he would be a loser in this life as well as in the next, because the desertion of Islam would not only deprive him of spiritual advantages, but also of the physical advantages which must accrue to the Muslims through the ultimate triumph of Islam. Neither here nor anywhere else in the Quran is there even a hint at the infliction of capital or any other punishment on the apostate. In the matter of religion, the Quran gives perfect freedom to all to adopt whatever religion they like: "And say: The Truth is from your Lord; so whoever wishes, let him believe, and whoever wishes, let him disbelieve" (18:29).

***c* (219-1)** The word *khamr* used here includes all intoxicating substances. The prohibition spoken of here as regards both intoxicating liquors and games of chance is made plainer in 5:90. The prohibition of intoxicants in connection with the mention of war shows that Islam wanted to inspire true courage into its

and their sin is greater than their advantage.[a] And they ask *y*ou as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare. Thus does Allah make clear to you the messages that you may ponder **220** on this world and the Hereafter. And they ask *y*ou concerning the orphans.[b] Say: To set right their affairs is good; and if you mix with them, they are your brethren.[c] And Allah knows him who makes mischief from him who sets (affairs) right. And if Allah pleased, He would have made matters difficult for you. Surely Allah is Mighty, Wise.

221 And do not marry female idolaters until they believe; and certainly a believing maid is better than a female idolater even though she please you. Nor marry (believing women) to idolaters until they believe; and certainly a believing slave is better than an idolater even though he please you. These invite to the Fire and Allah invites to the Garden and to forgiveness by His will and He makes clear His messages to people that they may be mindful.

Section 28: **Divorce**

222 And they ask *y*ou about menstruation.[d] Say: It is harmful;[e] so keep aloof from women during menstrual discharge and do not

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followers and disliked the reckless daring which a man shows under the influence of intoxicating liquors and which has so often led to atrocities in wars. The constant fighting of Arab tribes, one against the other, had made the habit of drink second nature to the Arab. Intoxicating liquors were the chief feature of their feasts, and the habit of drink was not considered an evil, nor had there ever been a temperance movement among them. Yet one word of the Holy Quran was sufficient to blot out all traces of it from among a whole nation.

a **(219-2)** Intoxicants and gambling are both declared in 5:91 as causing "enmity and hatred among you", and a society the members of which are imbued with feelings of hatred and enmity towards each other could never prosper.

b **(220-1)** From the earliest, the revelations of the Quran always speak of the orphans, the needy, and the slaves in the kindest words, and lay special stress on helping and feeding them. See 90:11–16 and other places.

c **(220-2)** Orphans are not to be treated as a separate class, and they should not be treated as living on the charity of others; they must be treated as brethren.

d **(222-1)** Just as war made many children orphans, it made many women widows, but questions relating to widowhood and divorce being somewhat analogous, the two questions are treated together here and further on.

e **(222-2)** The word used (*adh-an*) signifies anything that causes a slight harm. It is not, however, the menstrual discharge that is called harmful here but having sexual relations while the woman is in that condition. The Jewish law

approach them (for intercourse) until they are clean. But when they have cleansed themselves, go to them as Allah has commanded you. Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves. **223**Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth when you like, and send (good deeds) beforehand for yourselves; and have regard for your duty to Allah and know that you will meet Him.[a] And give good news to the believers.

224 And do not make Allah by your oaths a hindrance to your doing good and keeping your duty and making peace between people.[b] And Allah is Hearing, Knowing. **225**Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned.[c] And Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing. **226**Those who swear that they will not have sexual

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contains a similar prohibition in Leviticus 18:19 and 20:18, though Jewish practice rendered it necessary that the separation between husband and wife should be complete. In Islam, it is limited to the cessation of sexual intercourse as the answer here shows.

a **(223)** This verse shows that the real object of marital relations is not simply the satisfaction of sexual desires. (*Editor's Note:* The comparison of women to the land that is tilled is to show that it is through them that the crop of the next generation of human beings grows and develops, both physically and in character. Men are also told here to do some act of moral goodness before approaching their wives sexually, and to have regard for duty to God which stands for having regard for one's duties towards others as required by God. Thus the husband is required to be mindful also of moral duty and responsibility in the matter of sexual relations with his wife, so that it should not be merely an occasion for him to gratify his lust selfishly with no regard for moral goodness or the rights of his wife.)

b **(224)** This verse refers to the pre-Islamic Arab custom of *īla',* a way of temporarily putting off the wife which was effected by an oath in Allah's name not to have sexual relations with her. The result of this was that the husband considered himself free from all marital obligations. The first step to bring about a reform in the relations of husband and wife was that this practice was abolished. It is in reference to this that the taking of oaths against the doing of good to others is prohibited. The fulfilment of marital obligations is thus referred to as *the doing of good* and *observance of duty* and *making peace between people*. But the subject is generalized and the taking of all oaths to forbid oneself the doing of good or fulfilment of obligations is prohibited. See also 66:2 footnote.

c **(225)** By *vain oaths* are meant *unintentional* or *thoughtless oaths* in ordinary conversation, and by *what the hearts have earned* is meant *an oath intentionally taken*.

relations with their wives should wait four months;[a] then if they go back, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **227**And if they resolve on a divorce,[b] Allah is surely Hearing, Knowing. **228**Divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three courses.[c] And it is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile if they wish for reconciliation.[d] And women have rights similar to those against them in a just manner,[e] and men are a degree above them.[f] And Allah is Mighty, Wise.

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a **(226)** *Īla'* signifies *an oath by a man that he shall not approach his wife*. In pre-Islamic times the Arabs used to take such oaths frequently, and as the period of suspension was not limited, the wife was compelled sometimes to pass her whole life having neither the position of a wife nor that of a divorced woman free to marry elsewhere. The Quran declares that if the husband does not reassert conjugal relations within four months, the wife shall be divorced. Cases in which husbands desert wives, having neither conjugal relations with them nor divorcing them, must be dealt with practically as amounting to *īla'*, so that after four months the wife should be free if she wants a divorce.

b **(227)** The Islamic law of divorce is elastic and does not strictly limit the causes of divorce. Divorce is allowed if sufficient reason exists, but the right is to be exercised under exceptional circumstances. A wife can claim a divorce according to the Islamic law, which was not a right conferred on her by Jewish and Christian laws on divorce as formulated in Deuteronomy and Matthew.

c **(228-1)** The period of waiting, or *'iddat,* forms the first condition in the Islamic law of divorce. But for cases in which marriage is not consummated, no period of waiting is necessary; see 33:49.

d **(228-2)** These words give a clear right to the parties to effect a reconciliation and re-establish conjugal relations within the period of waiting. No special procedure is necessary for this but both the divorce and the reconciliation must take place in the presence of witnesses. If, however, the *'iddat* is over and no reconciliation has been effected, the relation of husband and wife can be re-established by remarriage, which right is given to the parties by v. 232.

e **(228-3)** The rights of women against their husbands are here stated to be similar to those which the husbands have against their wives. The change in this respect was really a revolutionizing one, for the Arabs hitherto regarded women as mere property. Women were now declared to have rights similar to those which were exercised against them. The equality of the rights of women with those of men was never previously recognized by any nation or any reformer.

f **(228-4)** The statement that "men are a degree above them" does not nullify the rights asserted in the previous passage. The words are added simply to show that the husband is the head of the household.

Section 29: **Divorce**

229 Divorce may be (pronounced) twice; [a] then keep (them) in good fellowship or let (them) go with kindness.[b] And it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them,[c] unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah. Then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah, there is no blame on them for what she gives up to become free thereby.[d] These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them; and whoever exceeds the limits of Allah, these are the wrongdoers.

230 So if he divorces her (the third time),[e] she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband. If he divorces her, there is no blame on them both if they return to each other (by marriage), if they think that they can keep within the limits of Allah.[f] And these are the limits of Allah which He makes clear for a people who know.

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a **(229-1)** The divorce spoken of here is the revocable divorce of v. 228, after which a reconciliation may be effected in the waiting period. Islam allows a revocable divorce on two occasions only, so that the period of waiting in each of these two cases might serve as a period of temporary separation during which conjugal relations could be re-established. Remarriage of the same parties is allowed after the lapse of the waiting period.

b **(229-2)** The husband must make his choice after the second divorce either to retain the wife permanently or to bring about a final separation. The object of a true marriage union is indicated in the simple words *keep them in good fellowship*. If good fellowship is entirely absent the only remedy is to let the woman *go with kindness*.

c **(229-3)** The full payment of the dowry to the wife by the husband is another condition relating to the Islamic law of divorce. (This is the nuptial gift the husband owes the wife, as agreed between them at the time of marriage.)

d **(229-4)** These words give the wife a right to claim a divorce. Islam gives the wife the right to claim a divorce even on grounds of disliking her husband, if she is willing to forgo the whole or part of her dowry (i.e., nuptial gift from the husband). The words *unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allah* mean their inability to perform towards each other their marital obligations and to maintain good fellowship. The words *if you fear* refer to the properly constituted authorities and this shows that the authorities can interfere in the matter.

e **(230-1)** The words refer to the "letting go with kindness" of the previous verse, and hence by *divorce* here is meant the irrevocable divorce pronounced a third time, i.e., after there has been a divorce and a restitution of conjugal rights twice.

f **(230-2)** When the wife has been divorced twice, after each of which

231 And when you divorce women and they reach their prescribed time, then retain them with kindness or let them go with kindness and do not retain them for injury so that you exceed the limits.[a] And whoever does this, he indeed wrongs his own soul. And do not take Allah's messages for a mockery,[b] and remember Allah's favour to you, and what He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom, instructing you by it. And keep your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is the Knower of all things.

Section 30: **Remarriage of divorced women and widows**

232 And when you divorce women and they end their term, do not prevent them from marrying their husbands if they agree among themselves in a lawful manner. With this is instructed he among you who believes in Allah and the Last Day. This is more virtuous for you and purer. And Allah knows while you do not know.[c]

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reconciliation has been effected and has failed, the third divorce becomes irrevocable. It is not simply by repeating the pronouncement of divorce three times that the third pronouncement becomes irrevocable. A divorce should actually have taken place twice, followed each time by reconciliation, then and only then the third divorce becomes irrevocable. It would, in fact, be very rare. After the third irrevocable divorce, the husband cannot remarry the divorced wife until she has been married elsewhere and divorced; but it must be a genuine marriage and a genuine divorce.

a **(231-1)** If the husband is proved to give injury to the wife, he cannot retain her, and she can claim a divorce. Injury to the wife may be of a general nature or one given with the object of compelling her to remit her dowry to obtain a divorce. It is for the judge to see that the husband is not taking undue advantage of his position. On the other hand, the husband is enjoined to show liberality to the divorced wife, and the judge would no doubt see that the injunctions of the Quran were observed. It is made clear in 4:35 that decision in matters of divorce rests with the judges appointed, not with the husband or the wife.

b **(231-2)** The injunctions relating to the kind treatment of women must not be taken lightly, we are told here. Retaining women to cause them injury has already been declared to be a transgression and emphasis is now laid on the proper observance of these injunctions by stating that these are most serious matters relating to the welfare of society as a whole.

c **(232)** As already stated, when a divorce is pronounced, the conjugal relations can be re-established within the period of waiting. Here it is stated that if the period of waiting has elapsed, even then the former husband can remarry the divorced wife. The decision to remarry is determined solely by mutual agreement between the former husband and wife, on terms of equality with one another.

233 And mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years,[a] for him who desires to complete the time of suckling. And their maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father according to usage. No soul shall be burdened beyond its capacity. Neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child; and a similar duty (devolves) on the (father's) heir. But if both desire weaning by mutual consent and counsel, there is no blame on them. And if you wish to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised according to usage. And keep your duty to Allah and know that Allah is Seer of what you do.

234 And (as for) those of you who die and leave wives behind, such women should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten days;[b] when they reach their term, there is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a lawful manner.[c] And Allah is Aware of what you do. **235**And there is no blame on you concerning what you speak indirectly in the asking of (such) women in marriage or keep (the proposal) concealed within your minds. Allah knows that you will have them in your minds, but do not give them a promise in secret unless you speak in a lawful manner. And do not confirm the marriage tie until the prescribed period reaches its end. And know that Allah knows what is in your minds, so beware of Him; and know that Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing.

Section 31: **Provision for divorced women and widows**

236 There is no blame on you if you divorce women while yet you have not touched them, nor appointed for them a portion. And provide for them, the wealthy according to his means and the restricted one according to his means, a provision according to usage. (This is) a duty on the doers of good.[d] **237**And if you divorce

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a **(233)** By *mothers* here are meant in particular, as the context shows, *women who have been divorced having children to suckle*.

b **(234-1)** The period of waiting in the case of a widow is four months and ten days. But in case a divorced woman or a widow is pregnant, the period of waiting is extended to the time of delivery (65:4).

c **(234-2)** The meaning is that the widow may look out for a husband and remarry. (*Editor's Note:* The words "what they do for themselves in a lawful manner" place decisions about the widow's remarriage entirely in her hands.)

d **(236)** The "portion" is the dowry due from the husband, so that even when

them before you have touched them and you have appointed for them a portion, (pay) half of what you have appointed unless they forgo or he forgoes in whose hand is the marriage tie.[a] And it is nearer to dutifulness that you forgo. Nor neglect the giving of free gifts between you. Surely Allah is Seer of what you do.

238 Guard the prayers and the most excellent prayer, and stand up truly obedient to Allah.[b] **239**But if you are in danger (say your prayers) on foot or on horseback. And when you are secure, remember Allah as He has taught you what you did not know.

240 And those of you who die and leave wives behind, should make a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for a year without turning (them) out.[c] Then if they themselves go away, there is no blame on you for what they do of lawful deeds concerning themselves. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. **241**And for divorced women, provision (must be made) in kindness.[d] This is incumbent

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no dowry has been agreed upon, and marriage has not been consummated, liberality must be shown to the divorced wife, and some provision should be made for her, even though the husband may be in difficult circumstances.

a **(237)** The husband is the person in whose hand is the marriage tie. His forgoing his due is equivalent to not claiming the half of the dowry which he is entitled to by this verse. Note that forgoing on the part of husbands is here stated to be the more commendable course.

b **(238)** There are several opinions regarding what is meant by the term translated above as "the most excellent prayer". Most probably it does not refer to any particular prayer and means simply attending to prayer in the most excellent form. The *guarding* of prayers is not simply the observance of the outward form; it is both the form and the spirit to which attention is drawn. Prayers are to be said at stated times and a particular method is to be observed, but this does not mean that the Islamic prayer is devoid of spirit. The external form is needed to bring the inner faculty into exercise. As regards the spirit of prayer, attention is called to it again and again in the Quran. Elsewhere we are told: "Prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil" (29:45). In fact, the Quran condemns prayers which are devoid of spirit (107:4–6).

c **(240)** What the widow obtains under this verse is in addition to the share of the deceased husband's property which she inherits under 4:11. It is plainly stated in 4:12 that anything to be paid under a will shall have precedence of the division of the property into shares under that verse.

d **(241)** This provision is in addition to the dowry which must be paid to them. Just as in the previous verse the widow is given an additional benefit, here a provision in addition to her dowry is recommended for the divorced woman. This shows how liberal are the injunctions of the Quran regarding women.

on those who have regard for duty. **242**Allah thus makes clear to you His messages that you may understand.

Section 32: **Fighting in the cause of Truth**

243 Have *y*ou not considered those who went forth from their homes, and they were thousands, for fear of death. Then Allah said to them, Die. Then He gave them life.[a] Surely Allah is gracious to people, but most people are not grateful. **244**And fight in the way of Allah,[b] and know that Allah is Hearing, Knowing. **245**Who is it that will offer to Allah a goodly gift, so He multiplies it to him manifold? And Allah receives and amplifies,[c] and to Him you shall be returned.

246 Have *y*ou not thought of the leaders of the Children of Israel after Moses? When they said to a prophet of theirs: Raise up for us a king, that we may fight in the way of Allah.[d] He said: May it not be that you will not fight if fighting is ordained for you? They said: And what reason have we that we should not fight in Allah's way and we have indeed been deprived of our homes and our children? But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them. And Allah is Knower of the wrongdoers. **247**And their prophet said to them: Allah has raised Saul to be a king over you. They said: How can he have kingdom over us while we have a greater right to kingdom than he, and he has not been granted abundance of wealth? He said: Surely Allah

a **(243)** The thousands referred to are the Israelites who left Egypt with Moses. They left Egypt for fear of death, for death would surely have been their fate if they had not emigrated. The next incident in their history referred to here is the Divine commandment to them to "die". This is more fully stated in 5:21–26. Moses told them to enter the Holy Land "which Allah has ordained for you", but they refused and were made to wander about in the wilderness for forty years, so that that generation perished. This is also shown by their history as given in the Old Testament. It is also meant as a warning for Muslims, who are told that if they followed the footsteps of the Israelites, death must be their fate.

b **(244)** See 2:190; fighting in Allah's way is equivalent to fighting in defence of faith.

c **(245)** *Allah receives and amplifies* means that Allah receives the gift that is offered to Him and then amplifies it; in other words, any sacrifice made in the cause of Truth is amply rewarded by Allah.

d **(246)** The prophet alluded to is Samuel. See 1 Samuel 8:19–20.

has chosen him above you, and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique. And Allah grants His kingdom to whom He pleases. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing. **248**And their prophet said to them: Surely the sign of his kingdom is that there shall come to you the heart in which there is tranquillity from your Lord and the best of what the followers of Moses and the followers of Aaron have left,[a] the angels bearing it.[b] Surely in this there is a sign for you if you are believers.

Section 33: **Fighting in the cause of Truth**

249 So when Saul set out with the forces, he said: Surely Allah will try you with a river. Whoever drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste it, he is surely of me, except he who takes a handful with his hand. But they drank of it except a few of them. So when he had crossed it, he and those who believed with him, they said: We have today no power against Goliath and his forces. Those who were sure that they would meet their Lord said: How often has a small group overcome a numerous army by Allah's permission! And Allah is with the steadfast. **250**And when they went out against Goliath and his forces, they said: Our Lord, pour out patience on us and make our steps firm and help us against the disbelieving people. **251**So they put them to flight by Allah's permission. And David killed Goliath, and Allah gave him kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased. And if it were not for Allah's repelling some people by others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allah is full of grace to the worlds. **252**These are the messages of Allah — We recite them to *y*ou with truth; and surely *y*ou are one of the messengers.

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a **(248-1)** The word *tābūt* means a *chest* or a *box*, but also signifies *the heart.* Tranquillity from the Lord is not a thing which is placed in boxes, but the heart is its real repository. On five other occasions the coming down of *sakīnah*, or *tranquillity*, is mentioned in the Quran, and every time it is *the heart of the Prophet* or *the faithful* that is the recipient of it. The coming of "the heart in which there is tranquillity" means the change which came over Saul when he was made king: "So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart" (1 Samuel 10:9). The best of what the true followers of Moses and Aaron left are spiritual blessings, the highest being Divine inspiration.

b **(248-2)** The meaning is that the tranquillity and inspiration were borne by the angels into the heart of Saul.

253 We have made some of these messengers to excel others.[a] Among them are they to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by (many) degrees of rank.[b] And We gave clear arguments to Jesus son of Mary, and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit. And if Allah had pleased, those after them would not have fought with one another after clear arguments had come to them, but they disagreed; so some of them believed and some of them denied. And if Allah had pleased they would not have fought with one another, but Allah does what He intends.

Section 34: **Compulsion in religion forbidden**

254 O you who believe, spend (on good works) out of what We have given you before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, nor friendship, nor intercession. And the disbelievers — they are the wrongdoers.

255 Allah — there is no god but He, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist. Slumber does not overtake Him, nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? [c] He knows what is before them and what is behind them. And they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He pleases. His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both does not tire Him. And He is the Most High, the Great.[d]

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a **(253-1)** This also refers to the excellence of the Prophet Muhammad over all other prophets.

b **(253-2)** Allah spoke to all, but there were some who were exalted above others by many degrees.

c **(255-1)** Islam does not recognize the concept that man stands in need of any mediator to reconcile him with God, as in the sense of the Christian doctrine. The Prophet is the model for his people and in this sense he is called a *shafī'* or *an intercessor*. Those who take him for their model are not all equally gifted, nor have all equal occasion for spiritual progress, though they exert themselves to their utmost. So Divine mercy takes them by the hand and amends are made for their shortcomings through the intercession of the Prophet. It is in this sense that Islam recognizes the doctrine of intercession in the life after death.

d **(255-2)** This is a very well-known verse which goes under the name of *āyat al-kursī*, or *the verse of knowledge*, because it deals with the all-comprehensive knowledge of Allah.

256 There is no compulsion in religion[a] — the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error. So whoever disbelieves in the devil and believes in Allah, he indeed lays hold on the firmest handle which shall never break. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing. **257**Allah is the Friend of those who believe — He brings them out of darkness into light. And those who disbelieve, their friends are the devils who take them out of light into darkness. They are the companions of the Fire; in it they abide.

Section 35: **How dead nations are raised to life**

258 Have *y*ou not thought of him who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingdom?[b] When Abraham said, My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die, he said: I give life and cause death.[c] Abraham said: Surely Allah causes the sun to rise from the East, so *y*ou make it rise from the West.[d] Thus he who disbelieved was baffled. And Allah does not guide the unjust people.

259 Or like him who passed by a town, and it had fallen in upon its roofs. He said: When will Allah give it life after its death? So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him. He said: How long have *y*ou remained? He said: I have remained a day, or part of a day. He said: No, *y*ou have remained a hundred years;

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a **(256)** To all the allegations that the Holy Prophet preached Islam by the sword, this verse is a sufficient answer. Being assured of success, Muslims are told that when they hold power in their hands their guiding principle should be that *there should be no compulsion in the matter of religion*. The claim that this passage was directed only to the early converts and that it was abrogated later on is utterly baseless.

b **(258-1)** The words "because Allah had given him kingdom" refer to Abraham. This is corroborated by 4:54. The Muslims are here told that just as a promise is given to them that they will be raised to great eminence, which is equivalent to raising the dead to life, a similar promise was given to Abraham, that promise being in fact the basis of the present promise to the Prophet.

c **(258-2)** As the discussion arose out of the promise given to Abraham that his descendants would be made a great nation, it is clear that the reference here is to the life and death of nations.

d **(258-3)** The disputant belonged to a race of sun-worshippers, and therefore if he could give life and cause death, he could control even his deity, the sun, and should be able to make it rise from the opposite direction.

but look at *y*our food and drink — years have not passed over it! And look at *y*our donkey! That We may make *y*ou a sign to people. And look at the bones, how We set them together then clothe them with flesh. So when it became clear to him, he said: I know that Allah is Powerful over all things.[a]

260 And when Abraham said, My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead, He said: Do *y*ou not believe? He said: Yes, but that my heart may be at ease. He said: Then take four birds, then tame them to incline to *y*ou, then place on every mountain a part of them, then call them, they will come to *y*ou flying; and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.[b]

Section 36: **Spending money in the cause of Truth**

261 The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains.[c] And Allah multiplies (further) for whom He

a **(259)** This refers to Ezekiel's vision as related in Ezekiel, ch. 37. The town is Jerusalem. The prophet dying for a hundred years is also an incident of the vision, standing symbolically for the death of the Jewish nation or the desolation of Jerusalem for almost a hundred years after Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar in 599 B.C. The bones were a symbol of the fallen condition of the house of Israel. The food and drink of the prophet not showing any influence of years, and his donkey still standing by, proves that the hundred years' death was only a vision. The vision made him a symbol of the whole Jewish nation, and his symbolic death for a hundred years represented the sorrows and afflictions of Israel for a similar period, after which they were once more to be restored to life.

b **(260)** This is a sequel to v. 258, which speaks of the manifestation of Allah's power in the life and death of nations. In Genesis 15:8 Abraham is made to say, after receiving a promise of the land of Canaan: "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" The Quranic parallel to this is: "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." He believed in the Divine promise, but how would it be fulfilled? The answer to Abraham's *how* as given in the Quran is a perfectly intelligible parable. If he should take four birds and tame them, they would obey his call and fly to him even from distant mountains. The words "place a part (*juz'*) of them" can only mean *one each of the four birds*. The story of *cutting the birds into pieces,* in connection with this verse, is not traceable to any reliable authority, nor do these words occur here. (*Editor's Note:* To revive a dead people with spiritual truth, from which they are running away like birds, they have to be tamed as one tames birds so that instead of being repelled away from the truth they are attracted towards it even from a great distance.)

c **(261)** The expenditure of money must be accompanied with hard labour, as a seed cast on the ground unaccompanied by any labour would not grow.

pleases. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing. **262**Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, their reward is with their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.[a] **263**A kind word with forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury. And Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing.

264 O you who believe, do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen by people and does not believe in Allah and the Last Day.[b] So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with earth upon it, then heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it bare! They are not able to gain anything of what they earn. And Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.[c] **265**And the parable of those who spend their wealth to seek Allah's pleasure and for the strengthening of their souls is as the parable of a garden on elevated ground, upon which heavy rain falls, so it brings forth its fruit twofold; but if heavy rain does not fall on it, light rain (is sufficient).[d] And Allah is Seer of what you do. **266**Does one of you like to have a garden of palms and vines with streams flowing in it — he has in it all kinds of fruits — and old age has overtaken him and he has weak offspring, when a whirlwind with fire in it strikes it so it becomes blasted? Thus Allah makes the messages clear to you that you may reflect.

Section 37: **Spending in the cause of Truth**

267 O you who believe, spend (on good works) out of the good things that you earn and out of what We bring forth for you from the earth, and do not aim at the bad to spend from it, while you

***a* (262)** Gifts, whether given in the cause of national or individual suffering, must not be accompanied by any interested motives; hence the donor is forbidden even to mention them afterwards.

***b* (264-1)** This conveys a very strong disapproval of giving charity to be seen by people, making it utterly hateful in the sight of true believers.

***c* (264-2)** The concluding words of the parable show that the efforts of the disbelievers to deal a deathblow to Islam are meant here. They were spending their money to retard the advancement of Islam, but their efforts would be fruitless.

***d* (265)** This is the parable of the believers who will reap the fruits of the sacrifices they make.

would not take it yourselves unless you turned a blind eye to it.[a] And know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy. **268**The devil threatens you with poverty and commands you to be miserly, and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing; **269**He grants wisdom to whom He pleases. And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good. And none are mindful but those who have understanding. **270**And whatever you spend in charity or (whatever) vow you vow, Allah surely knows it. And the wrongdoers shall have no helpers.

271 If you manifest charity, how excellent it is! And if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is good for you.[b] And it will do away with some of your evil deeds; and Allah is Aware of what you do. **272**Their guidance is not *y*our duty, but Allah guides whom He pleases. And whatever good thing you spend, it is to your good. And you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure. And whatever good thing you spend, it will be paid back to you in full, and you will not be wronged.[c]

273 (Charity is) for the poor who are confined in the way of Allah [d] — they cannot go about in the land; the ignorant man thinks

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***a* (267)** Muslims are here enjoined to support the cause of Truth by spending good things, things which they love, and not to even think of giving bad things, things which they themselves would not accept from others. Elsewhere it is said: "You cannot attain to righteousness unless you spend out of what you love" (3:92).

***b* (271)** The *manifesting of charity* or *giving charity openly* is quite different from giving "to be seen by people", for which see v. 264. By the giving of charity openly is meant the giving of subscriptions for the advancement of national or public welfare. The rule laid down here enjoins public as well as private acts of charity, mentioning public charity first, as that is of greater importance.

***c* (272)** Muslims did not fight to bring the disbelievers into the fold of Islam; for that, the Prophet is told here in plain words, was not his responsibility. It was for the good of their people, for their defence, that the Muslims were required to raise subscriptions. Hence what they spent was for Allah's pleasure, because it was in the cause of truth. They are assured that for these deeds of sacrifice they will be fully rewarded. As regards private charity, Muslim charity was exercised not only for the welfare of their own people but also for that of non-Muslims. Islam did not allow difference of religion to be a hindrance in giving charity.

***d* (273-1)** "Confined in the way of Allah" included those who had to fight in defence of Islam but had no means of livelihood, those who could not go forth to trade because of insecurity, and those who were wounded in the fighting.

them to be rich on account of (their) abstaining (from begging). *Y*ou can recognize them by their mark — they do not beg of people demandingly.[a] And whatever good thing you spend, surely Allah is Knower of it.

Section 38: **Usury prohibited**

274 Those who spend their wealth by night and day, privately and publicly, their reward is with their Lord; and they have no fear, nor shall they grieve. **275**Those who swallow usury cannot arise except as he arises whom the devil prostrates by (his) touch.[b] That is because they say, Trading is only like usury. And Allah has allowed trading and forbidden usury.[c] To whomsoever then the exhortation has come from his Lord, and he refrains, he shall have what has already passed. And his affair is in the hands of Allah. And whoever returns (to it) — these are the companions of the Fire: in it they will abide. **276**Allah will blot out usury, and He causes charity to prosper.[d] And Allah does not love any ungrateful sinner.

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a **(273-2)** Those who abstain from begging deserve to be assisted by private acts of charity.

b **(275-1)** *Ribā* means *an addition over and above the principal sum that is lent* and includes *usury* as well as *interest*. Just as charity is the broad basis of human sympathy, usury annihilates all sympathetic affection and leads to the extreme of miserliness. Islam refused to allow the rich to grow richer by reducing the poor to still greater poverty, which is the real aim of usury. Usury causes man to be obsessed by love of wealth and selfishness; and this is, in fact, what is meant by the devil prostrating a devourer of usury. It may also be mentioned that while Islam enjoins acts of sacrifice to carry on the struggle for national existence, it prohibits usurious dealings which are the basis of modern warfare. All wars are now carried on with the help of loans, interest on which ultimately is a source of ruin to both the conquerers and the conquered. A just war, a war in self-defence, would always lead a community to acts of sacrifice to which they would be impelled in the interest of their own existence.

c **(275-2)** In trade the capitalist takes the risk of loss along with the hope of profit, but in lending money on usury the whole of the loss is suffered by the one who uses his labour, while the capitalist may count upon his profit even in the case of loss in the actual concern. Hence trading is quite different from usury.

d **(276)** Usury is here condemned, while charitable deeds are commended as being the real source of the prosperity of a nation or of humanity in general. It is a prophetic reference to the general tendency in the growth of civilization to lessening rates of interest, so much so that usurious dealings, in the proper sense

[277]Those who believe and do good deeds and keep up prayer and give the due charity — their reward is with their Lord; and they have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

278 O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah and relinquish what remains (due) from usury, if you are believers. [279]But if you do not, then be apprised of war from Allah and His Messenger; [a] and if you repent, then you shall have your capital. Wrong not, and you shall not be wronged. [280]And if (the debtor) is in difficulty, let there be postponement till (he is in) ease. And that you forgo it as charity is better for you, if only you knew.[b] [281]And guard yourselves against a day in which you will be returned to Allah. Then every soul will be paid in full what it has earned, and they will not be wronged.

Section 39: **Contracts and evidence**

282 O you who believe, when you contract a debt for a fixed time, write it down.[c] And let a scribe write it down between you with fairness; nor should the scribe refuse to write as Allah has taught him, so let him write. And let him who owes the debt dictate, and he should observe his duty to Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything from it. But if he who owes the debt is unsound in understanding or weak, or (if) he is not able to dictate himself, let

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of the word, are becoming almost extinct, while the tendency for public charity or personal sacrifice in the interests of a community, or even humanity in general, is gaining ground.

***a* (279)** Going directly against the commandments of Allah is here described as a war with Allah and His Messenger. The money received as bank interest may be spent in the cause of Allah and His Messenger or for the propagation of Islam. In fact the Divine purpose in the prohibition of interest is fulfilled if interest is changed into charity.

***b* (280)** This indicates the kind of sympathy Islam demands. The poor man is not to be prosecuted and thrown into prison, and payment of debt must be postponed till the debtor is able to pay, or, better still, the whole may be remitted as charity.

***c* (282-1)** If Islam enjoins charity and prohibits usury, it also requires that the greatest precautions must be taken for safeguarding property rights. The Arabs were quite an illiterate people, among whom writing was very rare. Even then they were required to put down all their transactions, great or small, in writing, except in hand-to-hand dealings.

his guardian dictate with fairness.[a] And call to witness from among your men two witnesses; but if there are not two men, then one man and two women[b] from among those whom you choose to be witnesses, so that if one of the two commits error, the one may remind the other.[c] And the witnesses must not refuse when they are summoned. And do not be averse to writing it whether it is small or large along with the time of its falling due. This is more equitable in the sight of Allah and makes testimony surer and the best way to keep away from doubts. But when it is ready merchandise which you give and take among yourselves from hand to hand, there is no blame on you in not writing it down. And have witnesses when you sell to one another. And let no harm be done to the scribe or to the witnesses.[d] And if you do (it), then surely it is a transgression on your part. And keep your duty to Allah. And Allah teaches you. And Allah is Knower of all things.

***a* (282-2)** A guardian may be appointed for one who is not able to manage his own property because he is a minor or his understanding is not sound on account of age or any other reason.

***b* (282-3)** As women did not take much part in business, and might be unfamiliar with the transaction, two women are required instead of one man. (*Editor's Note:* It is quite unwarranted to presume from this advice that the evidence of two women *equals* the evidence of one man. According to 24:6–9, if a husband accuses his wife of adultery which she denies and he is the sole witness, her testimony is treated as of equal value to his. In 5:106 and 65:2 it is required to have "two just ones" as witnesses and not specifically men. There are a number of reports in Hadith showing that the Holy Prophet Muhammad gave full weight to the testimony of a woman.)

***c* (282-4)** The personal pronoun *humā* may refer either to the testimony of the *two witnesses* or the *two women. Reminding* here stands for *making up* the deficiency of the other's memory. The Holy Quran does not say that no case should be decided except on the testimony of two witnesses, but requires ordinarily the calling of two witnesses at the time of the transaction, so that the deficiency of one may be rectified by the other. Cases may be decided on circumstantial evidence as well, which is sometimes stronger than the evidence of witnesses. The Quran itself speaks of Joseph's innocence being established on circumstantial evidence (12:26–27).

***d* (282-5)** The scribe and the witnesses must not be made to suffer loss in their own business. In other words, their convenience must be kept in view, and they should be paid.

283 And if you are on a journey and you cannot find a scribe, a security may be taken into possession.[a] But if one of you trusts another, then he who is trusted should deliver his trust, and let him keep his duty to Allah, his Lord. And do not conceal testimony. And whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful. And Allah is Knower of what you do.

Section 40: **Muslims shall be made victorious**

284 To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And whether you manifest what is in your minds or hide it, Allah will call you to account according to it.[b] So He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases. And Allah is Powerful over all things.

285 The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. They all believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His messengers. We make no distinction between any of His messengers.[c] And they say: We hear and obey; our Lord, Your forgiveness (do we crave), and to You is the eventual course.

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a **(283)** This does not mean that a security cannot be taken in any other case. Security may be taken when the lender does not trust the debtor. Also, advantage can be derived by the lender from the property which has been given into his possession as a security for the debt.

b **(284)** This verse does not signify "Allah will call you to account for it" but that He "will call you to account *according to it*"; so that he who hides (i.e., keeps under control) his evil inclinations and he who manifests (i.e., gives vent to them) shall not be dealt with in the same manner, but according to their deserts. Almost the same statement is contained in 3:29, where it is said: "Say: Whether you hide what is in your hearts or manifest it, Allah knows it." Evil thoughts are not unpunishable, but evil inclinations which a man keeps suppressed, and which therefore gradually disappear, cannot be included in the category of evil thoughts; it is these that are meant here.

c **(285)** The breadth of the Muslim faith, which has been dealt with on several occasions in this chapter, is again mentioned in reference to the triumph of the Muslims; for even if the Muslims were triumphant, their religion could not triumph over other religions unless established on very broad principles which should commend themselves to all. The triumph of the Muslim religion would be due to the excellence and breadth of its principles. Hence, even in these days of Muslim political decadence, Islam is making spiritual conquests.

286 Allah does not impose on any soul a duty beyond its ability. To its benefit is what (good) it earns, and to its detriment is what (evil) it works. Our Lord, do not punish us if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord, do not lay on us a burden as You did lay on those before us. Our Lord, do not impose on us (afflictions) which we have not the strength to bear. And pardon us! And grant us protection! And have mercy on us! You are our Patron, so grant us victory over the disbelieving people.[a]

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a **(286)** As a preliminary to the prayer for *victory over the disbelieving people*, there is one set of three petitions in the first part of the verse and another set of three petitions in the second part. The first three petitions made to God are: *do not punish us, do not lay on us the burden of sins, do not impose on us afflictions which we have not the strength to bear*. Corresponding to these three petitions respectively are the three petitions in the second part, *pardon us, grant us protection, have mercy on us*. Thus corresponding to the desire to be saved from punishment is the petition that God may pardon His servant whatever faults he has committed; corresponding to the desire that one may not be burdened with sins is the petition that one may be granted protection from the commission of sins; and corresponding to the desire to be saved from afflictions which one has not the strength to bear is the petition for the mercy of God.

It is noteworthy that if Muslims are taught to pray for victory over disbelievers, as here, they are at the same time taught to be humble and forgiving.

Chapter 3

Āl ʻImrān The Family of Amran

The name of this chapter is taken from the mention of *ʻImrān* in v. 33, who is Amran of the Bible, the father of Moses and Aaron. It deals with the departure of prophethood from the Mosaic dispensation. It opens with a rule of interpretation for Divine books, which is that any allegorical statement must be interpreted so as not to contradict the clear principles laid down by Divine revelation. This is a preliminary to a discussion of Christian doctrines, which are based on wrong interpretations of certain allegorical statements. The chapter then deals with: the last Divine elect of the Israelites, including Jesus, after whom the spiritual kingdom was granted to the Muslims, religious controversy with the Jews and Christians, and their opposition to Islam, testimony to the truth of Islam in previous scriptures, the need for Muslim unity, the need for Muslims to show perseverance in suffering as in the Battle of Uhud, and how they will triumph in the end after their struggles. Almost the entire chapter was revealed in 3 A.H.

Section 1: **Rule of interpretation**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Best Knower [a] — **2**Allah, (there is) no god but He, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting, by Whom all subsist.[b] **3**He has revealed to *y*ou the Book with truth,[c] verifying what is (already) before it — and He revealed the Torah and the Gospel[d]

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a **(1)** For explanation, see 2:1 footnote.

b **(2)** As this chapter controverts Christian doctrines, it fittingly opens with two attributes of the Divine Being, the Ever-living and the Self-subsisting, which refute the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ. The statement that there is *no god but He* contains an ideal expression of the religion of Islam in four words.

c **(3-1)** "With truth" signifies that the Quran was revealed suitably to the requirements of wisdom and justice, and to the exigencies of the case; in other words, it was revealed at a time when revelation was sorely needed by humanity.

d **(3-2)** *Taurāt* is the name given to the books of Moses, or the Pentateuch, and hence its correct rendering is the Hebrew word *Torah*. The *Taurāt* does not signify the Old Testament, because the latter is the name of the whole collection of the books of the Israelite prophets. The word *Injīl* (Gospel) does not signify the New Testament but the revelation granted to Jesus.

[4]before, (as) a guidance for the people [a] — and He sent the Criterion. [b] Those who disbelieve in the messages of Allah — for them is a severe punishment. And Allah is Mighty, the Lord of retribution.[c] [5]Surely nothing in the earth or in the heaven is hidden from Allah. [6]He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise.

7 He it is Who has revealed the Book to *y*ou; some of its verses are decisive — they are the basis of the Book — and others are allegorical.[d] Then those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation.[e] And none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those firmly rooted in knowledge. They say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord.[f] And none are mindful except

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a **(4-1)** The Torah and the Gospel were undoubtedly a guidance before the Quran; but even as they now exist, they afford guidance in many respects with a mixture of error, and contain numerous prophecies fulfilled in the advent of Prophet Muhammad.

b **(4-2)** See 2:53 and 2:185 footnote 3. The Quran is here mentioned by the name *Furqān* or that which distinguishes between truth and falsehood, and provides a criterion, because it was sent to separate the truth in previous revelation from the falsehood which had found its way into it. As the *Furqān,* or the criterion of truth, in the case of the Holy Prophet was also provided by the Battle of Badr, this event is referred to in v. 13 as a prelude to the actual controversy.

c **(4-3)** The word used here for *retribution* conveys the idea of *avenging* but not of revenge.

d **(7-1)** The Quran establishes certain principles in clear words which are to be taken as the basis, while there are statements made in allegorical words or susceptible to different meanings, the interpretation of which must be in consonance with the other parts and the spirit of the Book. When a certain principle is laid down in unmistakable words, any statement carrying a doubtful significance, or one which is apparently opposed to that principle, must be interpreted subject to the principle enunciated. The subject is appropriately dealt with here as a prelude to a controversy with the Christians, who attribute divinity to Jesus on the basis of certain ambiguous words or allegorical statements, without heeding the fundamental principles established by the earlier prophets.

e **(7-2)** These are people who do not care to seek the real interpretation which can only be found by referring to the principles laid down elsewhere but give an interpretation to an ambiguous verse *alone*, without considering it in conjunction with other similar verses or the principles laid down elsewhere.

f **(7-3)** The words *it is all from our Lord* signify that there is no disagreement between the various portions of the Holy Book. Hence the rule of interpretation which they follow is that they refer passages which are susceptible to various interpretations to those whose meaning is obvious or to similar passages, and subject particular statements to general principles.

those who have understanding. [8]Our Lord, do not make our hearts to deviate after You have guided us and grant us mercy from Yourself; surely You are the most liberal Giver. [9]Our Lord, surely You are the Gatherer of people on a day about which there is no doubt. Surely Allah will not fail in (His) promise.

Section 2: **Unity of God as basis of all religions**

10 Those who disbelieve, neither their wealth nor their children will avail them at all against Allah. And they will be fuel for fire — [11]as was the case of the people of Pharaoh, and those before them! They rejected Our messages, so Allah destroyed them on account of their sins. And Allah is Severe in retribution. [12]Say to those who disbelieve: You will be defeated, and driven together to hell; and evil is the resting-place.[a] [13]Indeed there was a sign for you in the two armies (which) met together in encounter — one party fighting in the way of Allah and the other disbelieving, whom they saw twice as many as themselves with the sight of the eye.[b] And Allah strengthens with His aid whom He pleases. There is surely a lesson in this for those who have eyes.

14 The love of desires is made attractive to people — of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well-bred horses and cattle and crop produce. This is the provision of the life of this world. And Allah — with Him is the good goal (of life). [15]Say: Shall I tell you of what is better than these? For those who guard against evil are Gardens with their Lord, in which rivers flow, to abide in them, and pure companions and Allah's goodly pleasure.[c] And Allah is Seer of the servants. [16]Those who say:

***a* (12)** This is one of the passages in which the punishment of this life, which is *defeat*, is spoken of in the same breath with the punishment of the Hereafter, which is *hell*.

***b* (13)** The reference here is to the Battle of Badr. The actual strength of the two parties was: Quraish about 1000, Muslims 313. The Muslims saw the disbelievers to be twice as many as themselves, and therefore they appeared fewer in their eyes as compared with their actual numbers. The Battle of Badr is here stated to be a sign of the truth of the Holy Prophet, not only because of the prophecies of victory contained in the Quran, but also because of the clear prophecy in the Bible in the book of Isaiah, 21:13–17. It speaks of future events in the land of Arabia, which clearly came to pass in the emigration of the Muslims to Madinah and the defeat, one year later, of the army of the Quraish.

***c* (15)** For the companions in paradise see 2:25, footnote 3. Among the

Our Lord, we believe, so forgive our sins and save us from the punishment of the Fire. **17**The patient and the truthful and the obedient and those who spend (on good works) and those who ask Divine protection in the morning times.[a]

18 Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining justice.[b] There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise. **19**Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam.[c] And those who were given the Book differed only after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves. And whoever disbelieves in the messages of Allah — Allah indeed is Quick at reckoning. **20**But if they dispute with *y*ou, say: I submit myself entirely to Allah and (so does) he who follows me. And say to those who have been given the Book and the Unlearned (people):[d] Do you submit yourselves? If they submit, then indeed they follow the right way; and if they turn back, *y*our duty is only to deliver the message. And Allah is Seer of the servants.

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blessings of paradise is Allah's goodly pleasure, which is elsewhere said to be the greatest of all the blessings of paradise (9:72). The addition of this word here shows that the blessings of paradise are spiritual.

a **(17)** Seeking of Divine protection (*istighfār*) is really a prayer to attain to sinlessness. The righteous servants of God are here spoken of as possessing the great qualifications of steadfastness, truthfulness, obedience to God, spending in Allah's way, and finally as resorting to *istighfār* or Divine protection, which shows that it is one of the highest stages to which the spiritual pilgrim aspires.

b **(18)** Allah bears witness to His Unity through nature, which is His handiwork, and also by His word made known through revelation. The angels bear witness by their working within man, whose nature bears testimony to Divine Unity. Those who have a true knowledge of the holy scriptures of any religion also bear testimony to the great truth of the Unity of Allah. The Unity of Allah is, in fact, the common principle which is recognized by all religions.

The words *maintaining justice* most likely qualify *those possessed of knowledge*, the meaning being that every possessor of knowledge, to whatever religion he may belong, bears witness to the grand truth of Divine Unity if he maintains justice in bearing witness.

c **(19)** The meaning is that the *principle* of submission to God, thereby *entering into peace,* has always been the true religion. According to the Holy Quran, *Islām* was the religion of all the prophets. The Israelite prophets who followed Moses are spoken of as *the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah)* (5:44). It is also the natural religion of man, as in 30:30 it is described as being "the nature made by Allah in which He has created mankind".

d **(20)** By the *Unlearned people* are meant *the Arabs*.

Section 3: **Kingdom granted to another people**

21 Those who disbelieve in the messages of Allah and would kill the prophets unjustly and kill those among people who command (the doing of) justice, announce to them a painful punishment. **22**Those are they whose deeds will be fruitless in this world and the Hereafter, and they will have no helpers. **23**Have *y*ou not seen those who are given a portion of the Book?[a] They are invited to the Book of Allah that it may decide between them, then some of them turn back and they withdraw.[b] **24**This is because they say: The Fire shall not touch us but for a few days; and what they forge deceives them regarding their religion. **25**Then how will it be when We gather them together on a day about which there is no doubt. And every soul shall be fully paid what it has earned, and they shall not be wronged?

26 Say: O Allah, Owner of the Kingdom, You give the kingdom to whom You please, and take away the kingdom from whom You please, and You exalt whom You please and degrade whom You please. In Your hand is the good. Surely You are Powerful over all things. **27**You make the night to pass into the day and You make the day to pass into the night; and You bring forth the living from the dead and You bring forth the dead from the living; and You give sustenance to whom You please without measure.[c]

28 The believers should not take the disbelievers as allies rather than believers.[d] And whoever does this has no connection with

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***a* (23-1)** The Jews are spoken of as being given only a portion of the Book, because much of it had already been lost. Moreover, the Torah was not a complete law.

***b* (23-2)** The reference here is to the broad principles of religion regarding which the Jews and the Christians differed. The *Book of Allah* is the Holy Quran which gave a decision in the differences between them.

***c* (27)** Verses 26–27 refer to the fact that kingdom and honour shall be given now to another nation, whose night shall be made to pass into a day of triumph. The Jews had already been warned by Jesus that "the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matthew, 21:43). A living nation of Muslims was brought forth from among the dead Arabs, and the living nation of Israelites was represented now by a people who were spiritually dead.

***d* (28-1)** The Muslims, being in a state of war with the disbelievers, were forbidden to look to their enemies to guard their interests or for help of any kind.

Allah — except that you guard yourselves against them,[a] guarding carefully. And Allah cautions you against His retribution. And to Allah is the eventual coming. **29**Say: Whether you hide what is in your hearts or manifest it, Allah knows it. And He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And Allah is Powerful over all things. **30**On the day when every soul will find present whatever good it has done, and whatever evil it has done, it will wish that between it and that (evil) there were a long distance. And Allah cautions you against His retribution. And Allah is Compassionate to the servants.

Section 4: **Last members of a chosen race**

31 Say: If you love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you,[b] and grant you protection from your sins. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **32**Say: Obey Allah and the Messenger; but if they turn back, Allah surely does not love the disbelievers.

33 Truly Allah chose Adam and Noah and the descendants of Abraham and the descendants of Amran above the nations,[c] **34**offspring, one of the other. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing. **35**When a woman of Amran[d] said: My Lord, I vow to You what is

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The clear statement made in 60:8–9 settles the point beyond all doubt: "Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. … Allah forbids you only with regard to those who fight you for religion, and drive you forth from your homes and help (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends of them."

a **(28-2)** The meaning is: *Do not look to them for guarding your interests, rather guard yourselves against them*.

b **(31)** The love of Allah is the great goal of life to which Islam leads.

c **(33)** Here begins the story of Jesus Christ, the central figure of the Christian religion, and as a preliminary we are told that if Jesus was chosen by God, so were his great ancestors, Adam and Noah. The descendants of Abraham and Amran are then spoken of as having been chosen above the nations. For the choice of the descendants of Abraham, see 2:124 footnote. They are divided into two branches, the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. The former are here spoken of as the descendants of *'Imrān,* who is the same as Amran of the Bible. The descendants of Amran are Moses and Aaron. Moses became the founder of the Israelite law and Aaron the head of the Israelite priesthood. The last of this race were John and Jesus. Their parents, Zacharias and Mary, are first spoken of here.

d **(35)** *Imra'at* means *a woman* and also *a wife*. I take *imra'at 'Imrān* as meaning *a woman of the family of Amran* rather than *wife of Amran* because the

in my womb, to be devoted (to Your service), so accept (it) from me; surely You, only You, are the Hearing, the Knowing. **36**So when she gave birth to it, she said: My Lord, I have given birth to a female — and Allah knew best what she had given birth to — and the male is not like the female,[a] and I have named it Mary, and I commend her and her offspring into Your protection from the accursed devil.[b]

37 So her Lord accepted her with a goodly acceptance and made her grow up a goodly growing, and gave her into the charge of Zacharias. Whenever Zacharias entered the sanctuary to (see) her, he found food with her. He said: Mary, from where does this come to *y*ou? She said: It is from Allah. Surely Allah gives to whom He pleases without measure.[c] **38**There did Zacharias pray to his Lord. He said: My Lord, grant me from Yourself goodly offspring; surely You are the Hearer of prayer. **39**So the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: Allah gives *y*ou the good news of John,[d] verifying a word from Allah,[e] and honourable and chaste and a prophet from among the good ones. **40**He said: My Lord, how can I have a son when old age has already come upon me, and my wife is barren? He said: Even thus does Allah do what He pleases. **41**He said: My Lord, appoint a sign for me. Said He: *Y*our sign is that *y*ou do not speak to people for three days except by signs.

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name of a great ancestor is frequently used to indicate the nation which has sprung from him. According to tradition, however, *'Imrān* was the name of Mary's father, and therefore the words *imra'at 'Imrān* may mean the wife of Amran.

a **(36-1)** She had vowed the child to be devoted to the service of the Temple, but a female could not do the priestly work.

b **(36-2)** Mary's mother while praying for Mary prays also for her *offspring*, because, while dedicating her daughter to the Temple, she entertained the hope that Mary would eventually become a wife and mother.

c **(37)** Mary's reply, that she got sustenance *from Allah,* is the reply of every devout person who believes that Allah is the sustainer of all, and that therefore all provision or sustenance comes from Him. Mary being attached to the Temple, the worshippers would naturally bring gifts to her, and as it was through Divine grace that she received these gifts she said that it was Allah Who gave her these things.

d **(39-1)** The Arabic word for John is *Yaḥyā,* this name indicating that *he would not die in sin* like his other relations.

e **(39-2)** The promise given to Zacharias was a word from Allah, and John was the verifier of that word, because his birth brought about the fulfilment of the prophecy. *A word from Allah*, therefore, stands for *a Divine prophecy*; see also 6:34 and 10:64.

And remember *y*our Lord much and glorify (Him) in the evening and early morning.

Section 5: **Birth of Jesus and his ministry**

42 And when the angels said: O Mary, surely Allah has chosen *y*ou and purified *y*ou and chosen *y*ou above the women of the world. **43**O Mary, be obedient to *y*our Lord and humble *y*ourself and bow down with those who bow.[a] **44**This is among the tidings of things unseen which We reveal to *y*ou. And *y*ou were not with them when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Mary in his charge, and *y*ou were not with them when they contended with one another.[b]

45 When the angels said: O Mary, surely Allah gives *y*ou good news with a word from Him[c] (of one) whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary,[d] worthy of regard in this world and the Hereafter, and one of those who are drawn near (to Allah), **46**and he will speak to the people when in the cradle and when of old age, and (he will be) one of the good ones.[e] **47**She said: My Lord, how can I have a son and man has not yet touched me? He said: Even so; Allah creates what He pleases. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, Be, and it is.[f]

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a **(43)** After speaking of Mary's birth and her growing up, the Quran now speaks of her election just as the righteous before her were elected. Evidently this refers to a time when she had grown up to the age of puberty and left the temple.

b **(44)** This verse cannot refer back to Mary's history as a child in the temple, as some think. The Quran has described her history in the natural order: her conception (v. 35), birth (v. 36), being dedicated to and residing in the temple (v. 37), and her election at the age of discretion (v. 42 and 43). Therefore this particular incident refers to her espousal. The casting of lots and the contention as to who should have her in his charge means her charge as a wife.

c **(45-1)** The good news was given *by means* of a prophetic word from God.

d **(45-2)** The Quran makes no mention at all of Mary's husband, but nor does it at all mention Moses' father when relating the circumstances of Moses' birth. The mere fact, therefore, that there is no mention of Jesus' father is not sufficient to show that Jesus had no father. Moreover, of his two parents Joseph and Mary, Mary was undoubtedly much more well-known than Joseph.

e **(46)** Speaking "when in the cradle and when of old age" cannot be considered as miracles, as the latter is undoubtedly not. The good news conveyed consists in the fact that the child announced will be a healthy child and shall not die in childhood. It would thus appear that, according to the Holy Quran, Jesus did not die at thirty-three years of age, but lived to a sufficiently old age.

f **(47)** She is told in reply to her question that the child will be born because

48 And He will teach him the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel, **49**and (make him) a messenger to the Children of Israel (saying): I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I determine for you out of dust (a thing) like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah's permission,[a] and I heal the blind and the leprous,[b] and bring the dead to life [c] with Allah's permission; and I inform you of what you should eat and what you should store in your houses.[d] Surely there is a sign in this for you, if you are believers. **50**And (I have come) verifying what is (already) before me of the Torah, and I allow you part of what was forbidden to you;[e] and I have come to you with a

God would bring about the circumstances which result in the birth of a child. The words do not show that she would conceive out of the ordinary course of nature, for there is no doubt that Mary had other children, which no one supposes to have been conceived out of the ordinary course of nature. Nor do the words that follow prove anything beyond the simple fact that Mary must give birth to a son in accordance with the prophecy. The whole of creation is brought about, we are told again and again, by the Divine word "Be" (see 2:117), yet no one supposes that creation is not brought about according to the laws of nature.

a **(49-1)** As Jesus spoke in parables, this passage must be taken allegorically. What is meant is that Jesus, by breathing a spirit into mortals, will make them rise above those who are bent low upon the earth, and the apostles of Jesus, who were all men of humble origin (which is referred to in the word *dust* in the parable), left everything for the master's sake and went into the world by his command to preach the truth. Here was mere dust having the form of a bird, which the messenger of God converted into high-soaring birds by breathing truth into them.

b **(49-2)** The Quran gives an explanation of the healing of the sick when, speaking of itself, it says that it is "a healing for what is in the hearts" (10:57), i.e., for spiritual diseases. A prophet's healing is spiritual, not healing of physical diseases. The Quran speaks of the blind and the deaf frequently, but it never means those who do not possess the senses of seeing and hearing.

c **(49-3)** The Quran says plainly that those who die are not sent back to this world; see 39:42 and 23:100. But the use of the word *mautā*, i.e., *the dead*, and of their *being raised to life*, is frequent in the Quran in a spiritual sense: "Is he who was dead, then We raised him to life … like him whose likeness is that of one in darkness" (6:122). And again: "O you who believe, respond to Allah and His Messenger, when He calls you to that which gives you life" (8:24). The prophets are raised only for quickening to life those who are spiritually dead, and it is to this quickening through Jesus that the Quran refers here.

d **(49-4)** Jesus laid special stress on not having any care "for the morrow", and advised a rich man when he came to him to sell all he had. He would have them lay up treasures in heaven. The verse refers to this aspect of his teaching.

e **(50)** The law of Moses was upheld by the Israelite prophets, but amended from time to time. These changes are particularly marked out in Jesus' teaching.

sign from your Lord, so keep your duty to Allah and obey me. **51**Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him. This is the right path.

52 But when Jesus perceived disbelief on their part, he said: Who will be my helpers in Allah's way? The disciples said: We are Allah's helpers; we believe in Allah, and (ask *y*ou to) bear witness that we are submitting ones. **53**Our Lord, we believe in what You have revealed and we follow the messenger, so write us down with those who bear witness. **54**And (the Jews) planned and Allah (also) planned. And Allah is the Best of planners.[a]

Section 6: **Jesus cleared of false charges**

55 When Allah said: O Jesus, I will cause *y*ou to die[b] and exalt *y*ou in My presence[c] and clear *y*ou of those who disbelieve[d] and make those who follow *y*ou above those who disbelieve to the day of Resurrection.[e] Then to Me is your return, so I shall decide between you in that in which you differ.[f] **56**Then as to those who disbelieve, I shall punish them with severe punishment in this world and the Hereafter, and they will have no helpers. **57**And as to those

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***a* (54)** The word *makr* used here is the equivalent of the word *plan*, the good or evil nature of the plan being dependent on the doer's intention. The Jews planned to put Jesus to death by crucifixion, and Allah made a plan to frustrate their plans; and Allah's plan was successful, i.e., he was saved from death on the cross, for which see 3:55 and 4:157.

***b* (55-1)** Ibn Abbas says that the words used here, *mutawaffī-ka,* mean *mumītu-ka*, i.e., *I will cause you to die* (see Bukhari, 65: *Surah* 5, ch. 13). These words are used to show that the Jewish plans to cause Jesus' death on the cross would be frustrated and that he would afterwards die a natural death; see 4:157.

***c* (55-2)** The word *raf'* signifies *raising* or *elevating*, and also *exalting* or *making honourable.* When the *raf'* of a human being to Allah is spoken of in the religious literature of Islam, it is always in the sense of exaltation. The *exaltation* of Jesus is mentioned here as a reply to the Jews, whose object was to make him die an accursed and ignominious death on the cross.

***d* (55-3)** This signifies clearing Jesus of the false charges relating to the alleged illegitimacy of his birth, and so on, charges of which Jesus was cleared by the Quran.

***e* (55-4)** This is the fourth promise made to Jesus in this verse, that those who follow Jesus shall be made dominant over his rejectors till the day of Judgment. Its truth is witnessed to this day in the dominance of the Christians over the Jews.

***f* (55-5)** Differences of belief are dealt with in the life after death, while the worst of transgressions in deeds are punished even in this life.

who believe and do good deeds, He will pay them fully their rewards. And Allah does not love the unjust.

58 This We recite to *y*ou of the messages and the Reminder full of wisdom. **59**The likeness of Jesus with Allah is truly as the likeness of Adam. He created him from dust, then said to him, Be, and he was.[a] **60**(This is) the truth from *y*our Lord, so do not be one of the disputers. **61**Whoever then disputes with *y*ou in this matter after the knowledge that has come to *y*ou, say: Come! Let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our people and your people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and invoke the curse of Allah on the liars.[b] **62**Surely this is the true account, and there is no god but Allah. And Allah, He surely is the Mighty, the Wise. **63**But if they turn away, then surely Allah knows the mischief-makers.

Section 7: **Controversy with Jews and Christians**

64 Say: O People of the Book, come to an equitable word between us and you, that we shall serve none but Allah and that we shall not set up any partner with Him, and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah. But if they turn away, then say: Bear witness, we are Muslims.[c] **65**O People of the Book, why do

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a **(59)** Adam stands for man generally, because *all human beings are created from dust* (see 18:37, 22:5 and 30:20). All that is meant is that Jesus is no more than a mortal, and that it is an error to take him for God. If Adam is taken as a proper name, the meaning would be that just as Adam was created from dust and then chosen by Allah, so was Jesus created from dust, and his election was similar to the election of Adam, the command "Be" referring to the election of a righteous servant of Allah. In either case there is no reference to Jesus being brought into existence without the agency of a male parent.

b **(61)** The persons addressed in particular in this verse are the members of the Christian deputation from Najrān that came in 10 A.H. to see the Prophet Muhammad. The deputation was lodged by the Holy Prophet in his mosque. Thus did he set an unparalleled example of freedom of religious belief and practice. After the Holy Prophet gave them arguments showing that Jesus was not God, and finding them still insisting on their false belief, they were invited as a last resort to pray earnestly that the curse of Allah might overtake the party that insisted on falsehood. After some deliberation they decided against it and told the Prophet that they had decided not to pray against him as suggested. Thereupon they were given a pledge by which they were free to practise their religion.

c **(64)** In this verse the Jews and the Christians are called upon to accept the broad principles of the faith of Abraham, which were also the basic principles of

you dispute about Abraham, when the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Do you not understand? **66**Look! You are they who disputed about that of which you had knowledge; why then do you dispute about that of which you have no knowledge? And Allah knows while you do not know.[a] **67**Abraham was not a Jew nor a Christian, but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim; and he was not of those who set up partners (with Allah). **68**The nearest of people to Abraham are surely those who follow him and this Prophet and those who believe. And Allah is the Friend of the believers.

69 Some of the People of the Book desire that they should lead you astray; and they lead astray only themselves, but they do not perceive. **70**O People of the Book, why do you disbelieve in the messages of Allah while you witness (their truth)? **71**O People of the Book, why do you mix the truth with falsehood, and hide the truth while you know?

Section 8: **Machinations to discredit Islam**

72 And a group of the People of the Book say: Affirm belief in what has been revealed to those who believe, in the first part of the day, and disbelieve in the latter part of it, perhaps they may turn back.[b] **73**And do not believe except in him who follows

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the faith of Islam. The words *some of us shall not take others for lords* is to the practice prevailing then both among Jews and Christians, and at present among Muslims too, to treat religious leaders as if invested with Divine powers. The basic doctrines of Islam are the greatest common measure of the truth contained in different religions of the world. The doctrine of Unity as taught by Islam affords an illustration. All higher religions start on the basis of Divine Unity but then each religious system has its peculiarities unknown to all others. Islam alone is free from all these additions to the basic doctrine, and it preaches Unity in its simplest form. There are no idols, no gods, no incarnations of the Divine Being, no sons of God, and finally no priests or clerics to be followed blindly.

a **(66)** The Jews invited people to a belief in the Torah and the Christians to a belief in the Gospel, but both these had lost the purity of the faith of Abraham which was pure monotheism, unmixed with either Jewish priesthood or Christian doctrine of sonship.

b **(72)** This has two different significances. One is that they should affirm belief in the earlier part of the revelation, while denying the latter portion, as some modern critics do, thus creating doubts as to the sincerity of the Prophet. The other is that they should affirm a belief in the truth of Islam in the morning and deny it in the evening, creating the impression that the religion of Islam was a

your religion.[a] Say: True guidance — Allah's guidance — is that one may be given the like of what you were given; or they would prevail on you in argument before your Lord.[b] Say: Grace is surely in Allah's hand. He gives it to whom He pleases. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing. **74**He specially chooses for His mercy whom He pleases. And Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.[c]

75 And among the People of the Book is he who, if *y*ou entrust him with a heap of wealth, would pay it back to *y*ou; and among them is he who, if *y*ou entrust him with a dinar, would not pay it back to *y*ou, unless *y*ou kept on demanding it. This is because they say there is no blame on us in the matter of the unlearned people and they forge a lie against Allah while they know.[d] **76**No, whoever fulfils his promise and keeps his duty — then Allah surely loves the dutiful. **77**Those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths — they have no portion in the Hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and for them is a painful punishment.

78 And certainly there are some of them who lie about the Book that you may consider it to be (a part) of the Book while it is not (a part) of the Book; and they say, It is from Allah, while it is not from Allah; and they forge a lie against Allah while they know. **79**It is not for a mortal that Allah should give him the Book and the judgment and the prophethood, then he should tell people: Be my servants besides Allah's; but (he would say): Be worshippers of the Lord because you teach the Book and because you study (it);

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false religion. The fact that a group of Jews, in Madinah under Muslim rule, could conceive this plan is a clear proof that apostates in Islam were not put to death.

***a* (73-1)** *Editor's Note:* This is the statement of the Jews continued from v. 72, that they should not believe in any prophet who did not follow their religion.

***b* (73-2)** The contention of the Jews not to believe in any prophet who did not follow the law of Moses is met with the reply that a revelation must be given to another prophet like the revelation that had been given to Moses, for the Divine promise to Moses was that God would raise up a prophet like him from among the "brethren" of the Israelites (Deuteronomy, 18:18). In this argument the Muslims are said to prevail over their opponents.

***c* (74)** Allah's choosing for His mercy stands here for His choice of a prophet.

***d* (75)** They considered themselves free from all responsibility towards the Arabs, despite any agreement they might have made with them. They are, however, told that God never allowed dishonesty against any people.

80nor would he command you to take the angels and the prophets for lords.[a] Would he command you to disbelieve after you submit?

Section 9: **Covenant of the Prophets**

81 And when Allah made a covenant through the prophets: Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom — then a Messenger comes to you verifying what is (already) with you, you shall believe in him, and you shall aid him. He said: Do you affirm and accept My compact in this (matter)? They said: We do affirm. He said: Then bear witness, and I (too) am a bearer of witness with you.[b] **82**Whoever then turns back after this, these are the transgressors. **83**Do they then seek other than Allah's religion? And to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they will be returned.[c]

84 Say: We believe in Allah and (in) what is revealed to us, and (in) what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) what was given to Moses and Jesus and to the prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit. **85**And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.[d]

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a **(80)** Thus according to the Quran no prophet — Jesus included — ever taught his followers to take him as God. Even the current Gospels do not attribute any such teaching to Jesus. The angels are mentioned because the pagan Arabs worshipped the angels.

b **(81)** The covenant was made *through* the prophets with their people. Both Moses and Jesus specially laid an obligation on their people to accept the prophet about whom they prophesied (see, for instance, Deuteronomy 18:18 and John 16:13). In fact, all the prophets of the world foretold the advent of the Prophet Muhammad. The covenant was made through each prophet separately as he appeared in the world. And just as all the prophets foretold the advent of the Prophet Muhammad and laid an obligation upon their people to accept him, so the Prophet Muhammad also taught his followers to believe in all the prophets that had appeared among different people in different ages, and this is stated in v. 84.

c **(83)** Compare 13:15, 22:18, etc., where it is said that all those who are in the heavens and the earth make submission to Allah. The verse, in fact, shows that Islam, or the rule of submission to Divine law, is a law which is seen working throughout nature, and this is an argument of the truth of the religion of Islam.

d **(85)** The cosmopolitan nature of the religion of Islam having been clearly set forth in the previous verse, it is now stated that anyone who refused to accept

86 How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing, and (after) they had borne witness that the Messenger was true, and clear arguments had come to them? And Allah does not guide the unjust people.[a] **87**As for these, their reward is that on them is the curse of Allah and the angels and of people, all together — **88**abiding in it. Their punishment shall not be lightened, nor shall they be given respite — **89**except those who repent after that and amend, for surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **90**Those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in disbelief, their repentance is not accepted, and these are they that go astray. **91**Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, the earth full of gold will not be accepted from anyone of them, though he should offer it as ransom. These it is for whom is a painful punishment, and they shall have no helpers.

Section 10: **Ever-living testimony to truth of Islam**

Part 4

92 You cannot attain to righteousness unless you spend (on good works) out of what you love.[b] And what you spend, Allah surely knows it. **93**All food was lawful to the Children of Israel, before the Torah was revealed, except what Israel forbade himself. Say: Bring the Torah and read it, if you are truthful.[c] **94**So whoever forges a lie against Allah after this, these are the wrongdoers.

95 Say: Allah speaks the truth; so follow the religion of Abraham, the upright one. And he was not one of those who set up partners (with Allah). **96**Certainly the first house appointed for

such principles would unfailingly lose in the end. A Muslim accepts the whole truth, the truth as revealed to any prophet anywhere in the world, the truth as revealed to all mankind.

a **(86)** The persons meant are those who believed in the former prophets and disbelieved in the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Having clear signs of the Prophet's truth with them, and professing a belief in the prophets who had foretold the advent of the last of the prophets, they still disbelieved in him.

b **(92)** The connection with the last verse is clear. No wealth will buy redemption for a person if he has wasted his opportunity here, and to make the best of that opportunity a person must spend here what he loves most.

c **(93)** The Jews objected to the Muslims making use of certain foods which the law of Moses did not allow. An answer is given here that such foods were lawful for Abraham and his descendants, and Islam agreed in principle with the religion of Abraham. By *all food* is meant *all food made lawful for Muslims*.

mankind is the one at Bakkah,[a] blessed and a guidance for the nations.[b] **97**In it are clear signs: (It is) the Place of Abraham; and whoever enters it is safe; and pilgrimage to the House is a duty which people owe to Allah — whoever can find a way to it.[c] And whoever disbelieves, surely Allah is above need of the worlds.

98 Say: O People of the Book, why do you disbelieve in the messages of Allah? And Allah is a witness of what you do. **99**Say: O People of the Book, why do you hinder those who believe from the way of Allah, seeking (to make) it crooked, while you are witnesses? And Allah is not heedless of what you do. **100**O you who believe, if you obey some of those who have been given the Book, they will turn you back as disbelievers after your belief. **101**And how can you disbelieve while to you are recited the messages of Allah, and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to a right path.

Section 11: **Muslims exhorted to remain united**

102 O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah, as it ought to be kept, and do not die except as Muslims.[d] **103**And hold fast by

***a* (96-1)** Bakkah is the same as Makkah (Mecca). The Temple at Jerusalem was erected long after Abraham, while the Holy House at Makkah was there even before Abraham, and was, in fact, the first House on earth for the worship of the Divine Being.

***b* (96-2)** The word *mubārak,* rendered as *blessed,* signifies the *continuance forever* of the blessings which a thing possesses. Thus Makkah is not only the first spiritual centre for mankind but also the ultimate spiritual centre for the whole of humanity.

***c* (97)** There are three signs or prophecies here with regard to the future of Makkah. The first sign is that it is the Place of Abraham and hence the first prophecy is that the doctrine of the Unity of God will be proclaimed to the whole world from this centre. The second sign is that Makkah will always be secure, i.e., it shall not fall into the hands of an enemy who should destroy it. Thus its security is assured both physically and spiritually. The third prophecy is that a pilgrimage to the Sacred House shall continue to be made forever, and no power in the world shall ever be able to put a stop to it. The most striking fact about these prophecies is that they were all announced at a time when the Prophet and his followers had apparently been driven away forever from the Sacred Place, when that place was in the exclusive possession of an enemy who did not allow the Muslims to visit it, and when the small Muslim community was in danger of being utterly destroyed by that powerful enemy at any moment.

***d* (102)** The Muslims are exhorted, first to be individually conscious of the

the covenant of Allah[a] all together and do not be disunited. And remember Allah's favour to you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favour you became brethren. And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it.[b] Thus Allah makes clear to you His messages that you may be guided. **104**And from among you there should be a community who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful.[c] **105**And do not be like those who became divided and disagreed after clear arguments had come to them. And for them is a grievous punishment.

106 On the day when (some) faces will brighten and (some) faces will darken.[d] Then as to those whose faces are darkened: Did you disbelieve after your belief? So taste the punishment because you disbelieved. **107**And as to those whose faces are brightened, they shall be in Allah's mercy. In it they shall abide. **108**These are the messages of Allah which We recite to you with truth. And Allah desires no injustice to (His) creatures. **109**And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And to Allah are all affairs returned.

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duty they owe to God (v. 102), and then to remain united in carrying the message of Islam to the whole world (v. 103). Every Muslim must live a life of true submission to God, so that when death comes to him it should find him a Muslim. As v. 104 shows, the Muslim's great duty, to which attention is called here, is the carrying of the message of Islam to others.

***a* (103-1)** By *the covenant of Allah* is meant *the Quran*, a significance supported by sayings of the Holy Prophet. All Muslims, we are here told, should be united in holding fast to the Quran and carrying its message to other people.

***b* (103-2)** Before the advent of the Holy Prophet, the Arabs were in a state of continual internecine warfare which threatened to devastate the whole country. He brought about the impossible of uniting all these factions.

***c* (104)** This verse and 9:122 both direct Muslims to have always among them a missionary group, whose only object should be the propagation of Islam and rightly directing their own people. This is the most neglected injunction of the Quran in our day. Muslims have arrangements for all other things but have no arrangements for inviting people to the great truth revealed in the Quran.

***d* (106)** By *faces brightening* is meant *their being expressive of joy*, and by *their darkening* is meant *their being expressive of regret.* (*Editor's Note:* Physical colour of skin, white or black, is not meant here; compare 16:58: "And when the birth of a daughter is announced to one of them, his face becomes dark".)

Section 12: **Relations of Muslims with Jews**

110 You are the best nation raised up for mankind: you enjoin good and forbid evil and you believe in Allah.[a] And if the People of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are believers but most of them are transgressors. **111**They will not harm you except a slight hurt. And if they fight you, they will turn (their) backs to you. Then they will not be helped. **112**Degradation will be their lot wherever they are found, except under a covenant with Allah and a covenant with people,[b] and they shall incur the wrath of Allah, and humiliation will be made to cling to them. This is because they disbelieved in the messages of Allah and killed the prophets unjustly. This is because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits. **113**They are not all alike. Of the People of the Book some are upright — they recite Allah's messages in the night-time and they adore (Him). **114**They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin good and forbid evil and hasten in (doing) good deeds. And those are among the righteous. **115**And whatever good they do, they will not be denied it. And Allah knows those who keep their duty.[c]

116 Those who disbelieve, neither their wealth nor their children will avail them at all against Allah. And these are the companions of the Fire; in it they abide. **117**The likeness of what they spend in the life of this world is as the likeness of wind in which is intense cold; it strikes the harvest of a people who are unjust to themselves and destroys it. And Allah did not wrong them but they wronged themselves. **118**O you who believe, do not take for intimate

a **(110)** The excellence of the Muslim people lies in their enjoining good and forbidding evil and in their great faith in Allah. If they lose these characteristics, they lose their excellence as well. Their excellence was no doubt due to the excellence of that Great Teacher who thoroughly purified them of the worst vices and made perfect the light within them.

b **(112)** The Jews had already been subjected to disgrace before the appearance of the Prophet. But with the advent of Islam they could better their condition either by accepting the covenant of Allah, by which is meant the acceptance of Islam, or by making a compact of security with such people as could give them protection. This remains true to this day.

c **(115)** These verses speak of the good among the Jews and the Christians. The Quran does not deny that there is good in others, its own eminence lying in the fact that it makes man attain the highest degree of perfection in goodness. Thus the description of the upright among the followers of the Book concludes with the words: *whatever good they do, they will not be denied it.*

friends others than your own people: they spare no pains to cause you loss.[a] They love whatever distresses you. Vehement hatred has already appeared from out of their mouths, and what their hearts conceal is greater still. Indeed We have made the messages clear to you, if you understand. **119**Look! You are the ones who will love them while they do not love you,[b] and you believe in the Book, (in) the whole of it. And when they meet you they say, We believe, and when they are alone, they bite (their) fingertips in rage against you. Say: Die in your rage. Surely Allah is Knower of what is in the hearts. **120**If good befalls you, it grieves them, and if an evil afflicts you, they rejoice at it. And if you are patient and keep your duty, their struggle will not injure you in any way. Surely Allah encompasses what they do.

Section 13: **The Battle of Uhud**

121 And when *y*ou went forth early in the morning from *y*our family, to assign to the believers their positions for the battle.[c] And Allah is Hearing, Knowing. **122**When two parties from among you thought of showing cowardice, and Allah was the Guardian of them both. And in Allah should the believers trust. **123**And Allah certainly helped you at Badr when you were weak. So keep your duty to Allah that you may give thanks.

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a **(118)** As the context shows, these people made war on the Muslims and wished to cause them loss. Hence Muslims could not be friendly with them.

b **(119)** This verse clearly indicates the difficulties which the Muslims had in establishing friendly and loving relations with non-Muslims. The Muslims would offer friendship, but the other party was always on the look-out for some opportunity to inflict loss on them.

c **(121)** Much of the rest of this chapter is devoted to the events of the Battle of Uhud. In 3 A.H. the Quraish marched against Madinah. The Prophet at first intended to stay within the town, but afterwards marched into the open field with a thousand men, one-third of whom, under the leadership of Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the hypocrite leader, left him and returned to Madinah. The enemy were first completely routed, but fifty Muslim archers, who were placed in a strong position to cut off the retreat of the enemy, made a mistake, and in order to join in the pursuit left their position. The enemy fell back upon the Muslims who were now in disorder and had lost their naturally fortified position, and after inflicting some loss upon them, left the field secure from the pursuit of the Muslim force. It was not a victory for the Quraish, who thought it safe to go back when they found the Muslims involved in their own troubles. They could not take a single prisoner of war, nor had they the courage to attack Madinah, which they did two years later with a very strong force.

124 When *y*ou said to the believers: Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should help you with three thousand angels sent down? [a] **125**Indeed, if you are steadfast and keep your duty, and they come upon you in a headlong manner, your Lord will assist you with five thousand of havoc-making angels.[b] **126**And Allah made it only as good news for you, and that your hearts might be at ease by it. And help comes only from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise, **127**that He may cut off a part of those who disbelieve or humble them so that they should return in failure.[c] **128***Y*ou have no concern in the matter whether He turns to them (mercifully) or punishes them; surely they are wrongdoers.[d] **129**And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Section 14: **What success meant for Muslims**

130 O you who believe, do not devour usury, doubling and redoubling, and keep your duty to Allah, that you may be successful.

***a* (124)** The promise of the coming of angels is fully explained in the 8th chapter in connection with the Battle of Badr. As here, it is first stated there that the promise was given only "as good news, and that your hearts might be at ease by it" (8:10). Then it is made further clear there that the believers were strengthened and made firm while terror was cast into the hearts of their enemy. This was the result of the action of the angels upon the hearts.

***b* (125)** The assistance of the angels stated in this verse refers to a third occasion, when the enemy came "in a headlong manner", all the tribes uniting with the Quraish to crush the Muslims. This happened in the Battle of *Aḥzāb*, or the Allies, when the Quraish, numbering about five thousand, with the help of allied forces, the total strength being more than ten thousand, suddenly attacked Madinah. The dispersal of such a large army when the Muslims were only about fourteen hundred was no doubt due to Divine help, sent through angelic hosts.

***c* (127)** Although the object of the disbelievers was to extirpate the Muslims by war, God's aim was not to destroy all the disbelievers by defeat but to cut off their ringleaders and chiefs. The word translated as "a part", *ṭaraf,* also means the leading men. When the leaders of mischief were cut off, the rest would be disappointed of attaining the object of extirpating Islam, and persecution would cease.

***d* (128)** As a mortal the Prophet might have sometimes desired a severe punishment for his enemies; but he is told that it was not his concern, for Allah might as well forgive them, even though they deserved punishment. The all-comprehensiveness of the Divine mercy expressed in this verse is unapproached in sacred literature.

[131]And guard yourselves against the fire which has been prepared for the disbelievers.[a] [132]And obey Allah and the Messenger, that you may be shown mercy.

133 And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden, as wide as the heavens and the earth; it is prepared for those who keep their duty: [134]Those who spend in ease as well as in adversity and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon people. And Allah loves the doers of good (to others).[b] [135]And those who, when they commit an indecency or wrong their souls, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sins. And who forgives sins but Allah? And they do not persist knowingly in what they do. [136]Their reward is protection from their Lord, and Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them. And excellent is the reward of the workers!

137 Indeed there have been examples before you; so travel in the earth and see what was the end of the deniers. [138]This is a clear statement for mankind, and a guidance and an admonition to those who would keep their duty. [139]And do not be weak-hearted, nor grieve, and you will have the upper hand if you are believers. [140]If a wound has afflicted you, a wound like it has also afflicted the (disbelieving) people. And We bring these days to people by turns, that Allah may know [c] those who believe and (He may) take witnesses from among you. And Allah does not love the wrong-doers, [141]and that He may purge those who believe and deprive the disbelievers of blessings. [142]Do you think that you will enter the Garden while Allah has not yet known those from among you who strive hard (nor) known the steadfast? [143]And certainly you desired death before you met it. So indeed you have seen it now as you look.[d]

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a **(131)** The fire in this case is excessive love of wealth. See chapter 104.

b **(134)** Restraining of anger, pardoning, and doing good to others, besides being great moral qualities, strengthen the bond of union which is so necessary for success. The verse has on many occasions inspired Muslims with the noblest thoughts of toleration and charitableness.

c **(140)** Allah knows all that is seen or unseen. The *knowing* here and the *not knowing* in v. 142 refer to the knowledge of the event actually having taken place.

d **(143)** This refers to the desire of those who insisted that they should meet the enemy in the open field, while the Holy Prophet's own desire was that the Muslims should defend themselves within Madinah.

Section 15: **Sufferings to be met with perseverance**

144 And Muhammad is but a messenger — messengers have already passed away before him. If then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels? [a] And he who turns back upon his heels will do no harm at all to Allah. And Allah will reward the grateful. **145**And no soul can die but with Allah's permission — the term is fixed. And whoever desires the reward of this world, We give him of it, and whoever desires the reward of the Hereafter, We give him of it. And We shall reward the grateful.

146 And how many a prophet has fought, with whom were many worshippers of the Lord. So they did not lose heart on account of what befell them in Allah's way, nor did they weaken, nor did they disgrace themselves. And Allah loves the steadfast. **147**And their cry was only that they said: Our Lord, grant us protection from our sins and our extravagance in our affair, and make firm our feet and grant us victory over the disbelieving people. **148**So Allah gave them the reward of the world and a good reward of the Hereafter. And Allah loves the doers of good (to others).

Section 16: **Causes of misfortune in Battle of Uhud**

149 O you who believe, if you obey those who disbelieve, they will make you turn back upon your heels, so you will turn back losers.[b] **150**Rather, Allah is your Patron, and He is the Best of the helpers. **151**We will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve [c] because they set up partners with Allah for which He has

***a* (144)** The Prophet received severe wounds in the Battle of Uhud; there was even a rumour that he was killed. Even if the Prophet were killed, Islam was so far superior to all forms of faith that the Muslims could not give up Islam. This verse served another important purpose at the death of the Prophet. Some of the Companions thought that he was not dead. Abu Bakr went in, and seeing that life had departed, ascended the pulpit and read this verse, which had a magical effect upon his hearers, all of them being convinced that the Prophet had passed away, as all prophets had passed away before him. The prophets were but mortals, and their span of mortal life must no doubt terminate like that of other mortals. This verse affords a conclusive proof that Jesus was also dead; otherwise Abu Bakr's argument could not have silenced the doubters of the Prophet's death.

***b* (149)** The war was carried on only with the object of making the Muslims renounce their religion, and hence they could not think of accepting the disbelievers as their rulers.

***c* (151)** The Muslims were less than one-fourth of their opponents, being at

sent down no authority, and their abode is the Fire. And evil is the abode of the wrongdoers.

152 And Allah certainly made good His promise to you when you slew them by His permission, until you became weak-hearted and disputed about the affair and disobeyed after He had shown you what you loved. Some of you desired this world, and some of you desired the Hereafter.[a] Then He turned you away from them that He might try you; and He has indeed pardoned you.[b] And Allah is Gracious to the believers. **153**When you went away far, and paid no heed to anyone, and the Messenger was calling you in your rear.[c] So He gave you (another) grief for (your) first grief that you might not grieve at what escaped you, nor (at) what befell you. And Allah is Aware of what you do.

154 Then after grief He sent down security on you, slumber overcoming a group of you,[d] while (there was) another group whom their own minds had made anxious — they entertained about Allah

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the same time not so well equipped as their foes, and in spite of the disorder into which the Muslim forces had fallen, the enemy had to flee, leaving the Muslims in the field, not even making a show of attacking Madinah, which was quite defenceless. This clearly shows that they were terror-stricken.

***a* (152-1)** The weak-heartedness of a part of the archers who were placed in an important position to cut off the enemy's retreat consisted in their disobeying the clear orders of the Prophet: "If you see us overcoming the enemy, do not leave your position, and if you see the enemy overcoming us, do not leave your position". But they fell a prey to the love of the world and left their position to get a share in the booty when they saw the enemy fleeing before the Muslim onrush.

***b* (152-2)** The enemy, who was being pursued, turned against the pursuers on seeing the important position of the archers vacated, and the result was that the Muslims who were now in disorder on account of the pursuit found themselves helpless against the enemy who turned back on them, and some of them who were cut off from the main body took to flight. However, God pardoned them as their flight was the result of circumstances which were beyond their control.

***c* (153)** It refers to the Prophet's call, at whom the Muslims now saw that the attack of the enemy was directed. So they did not grieve for losing an opportunity of pursuing the enemy, but for the dangerous position in which they saw the Prophet.

***d* (154-1)** This happened when the enemy departed. The slumber was a sign of security.

thoughts of ignorance quite unjustly.[a] They said: Have we any hand in the affair? Say: The affair is wholly (in the hands) of Allah. They hide within themselves what they would not reveal to *y*ou. They say: If we had any hand in the affair, we would not have been slain here.[b] Say: Had you remained in your houses, those for whom slaughter was ordained would have gone forth to the places where they would be slain.[c] And (this happened) that Allah might test what was in your minds and that He might purge what was in your hearts. And Allah is Knower of what is in the minds. **155**Those of you who turned back on the day when the two armies met, only the devil sought to cause them to make a slip on account of some deeds they had done, and certainly Allah has pardoned them. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing.[d]

Section 17: **Battle of Uhud afforded a distinction**

156 O you who believe, do not be like those who disbelieve and say of their brethren when they travel in the earth or engage in fighting: If they had been with us, they would not have died, or been killed; [e] that Allah may make it a regret in their hearts. And Allah gives life and causes death. And Allah is Seer of what you do.

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a **(154-2)** These were the disaffected who took no part in fighting. They now gave vent to their hidden rancour against the Muslims. The evil thoughts which the hypocrites entertained about Allah were that Allah had not helped the Muslims.

b **(154-3)** The hypocrites sided with the minority whose counsel was that the Muslims should not fight the enemy in the open field and should remain besieged in Madinah. The majority was, however, in favour of going out and meeting the enemy where it had encamped. The Prophet decided that the majority vote must be accepted. The hypocrites now argued that the disaster would not have befallen the Muslims if their advice as to remaining within the town had been accepted. They took no part in fighting but they spoke of the loss of the Muslims as their own loss.

c **(154-4)** They are given the reply that even if the Muslims had defended themselves by remaining in Madinah, those who laid down their lives in the field of Uhud would have laid them down in Madinah as well.

d **(155)** The persons spoken of here are those who were unable to join the main Muslim army and fled to Madinah, or in some other direction. It was a slip on their part, not intentional disobedience, and God granted them a free pardon.

e **(156)** By "their brethren" are meant their relatives who were sincere in professing Islam, and who had to lay down their lives in defence of their faith.

157 And if you are killed in Allah's way or you die, surely Allah's protection and (His) mercy are better than what they amass. **158**And if you die or you are killed, to Allah you are gathered.

159 Thus it is by Allah's mercy that *y*ou are gentle to them. And if *y*ou had been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around *y*ou.[a] So pardon them and ask protection for them, and consult them in (important) matters.[b] But when *y*ou have determined, put *y*our trust in Allah.[c] Surely Allah loves those who trust (in Him). **160**If Allah helps you, there is none that can overcome you; and if He forsakes you, who is there that can help you after Him? And in Allah should the believers put their trust.

161 And it is not for a prophet to act dishonestly. And whoever acts dishonestly will bring his dishonesty on the day of Resurrection. Then shall every soul be paid back fully what it has earned, and they will not be wronged. **162**Is then he who follows the pleasure of Allah like him who incurs Allah's displeasure, and his abode is hell? And it is an evil destination. **163**There are grades with Allah. And Allah is Seer of what they do.

164 Certainly Allah conferred a favour on the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His messages and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error. **165**What! When a misfortune befell you, and you had inflicted twice as much, you say: From where is this? Say: It is from yourselves. Surely Allah is Powerful over all things. **166**And what

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a **(159-1)** The Quran calls attention to the Prophet's gentle dealing with those around him when speaking of his experience in the field of battle as a general, a capacity which required him to be very strict in punishing any delinquency. He was the ablest general in leading his men, yet his gentle manners and his forbearance in dealing with his friends as well as foes stand in remarkable contrast with his capacity as a commander in the field of battle. After the Uhud trouble he did not speak even a harsh word to those who were guilty of disobeying his orders.

b **(159-2)** It was the majority decision to meet the enemy in the open field that had brought about the present trouble, but just at this juncture Divine revelation affirmed the principle of adhering to decision by counsel.

c **(159-3)** Trusting in Allah does not imply inaction. Everything necessary is to be done. A course of action must be determined and then in pursuing that course trust must be placed in Allah. The consequences must then be accepted.

befell you on the day when the two armies met was by Allah's permission, that He might know the believers, [167]and that He might know the hypocrites. And it was said to them: Come, fight in Allah's way, or defend yourselves.[a] They said: If we knew fighting, we would have followed you. They were on that day nearer to disbelief than to belief; they say with their mouths what is not in their hearts. And Allah best knows what they conceal. [168]Those who said of their brethren whilst they (themselves) held back: If they had obeyed us, they would not have been killed. Say: Avert death from yourselves, if you are truthful.

169 And do not think of those who are killed in Allah's way as dead. Rather, they are alive being provided sustenance from their Lord, [170]rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them, have not yet joined them, that they have no fear, nor shall they grieve. [171]They rejoice for Allah's favour and (His) grace, and that Allah does not waste the reward of the believers.

Section 18: **Uhud no gain to the enemy**

172 Those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger after the misfortune had befallen them — for such among them who do good and keep their duty is a great reward. [173]Those to whom people said: Surely men have gathered against you, so fear them; but this increased their faith, and they said: Allah is sufficient for us and He is an excellent Guardian. [174]So they returned with favour from Allah and (His) grace; no evil touched them, and they followed the pleasure of Allah. And Allah is the Lord of mighty grace. [175]It is the devil who only frightens his friends, but do not fear them, and fear Me, if you are believers.

176 And do not let those grieve *y*ou who run into disbelief hastily; surely they can do no harm to Allah. Allah does not intend to assign them any portion in the Hereafter; and for them is a grievous punishment. [177]Those who buy disbelief at the price of faith can do no harm to Allah, and for them is a painful punishment. [178]And those who disbelieve should not think that our granting them respite is good for themselves. We grant them respite only

***a* (167)** The words show clearly that, in the language of the Quran, *fighting in Allah's way* carries the significance of *fighting in self-defence*.

that they may add to their sins; and for them is a humiliating punishment. [179]Allah will not leave the believers in the condition in which you are until He separates the evil from the good. Nor is Allah going to make you acquainted with the unseen, but Allah chooses of His messengers whom He pleases. So believe in Allah and His messengers. And if you believe and keep your duty, you will have a great reward.

180 And those who are miserly in spending what Allah has granted them out of His grace should not think that it is good for them. Rather, it is evil for them. They shall have a collar of their miserliness on their necks on the day of Resurrection.[a] And Allah's is the heritage of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Aware of what you do.

Section 19: **Carpings of the People of the Book**

181 Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said: Allah is poor and we are rich. We shall record what they say, and their killing the prophets unjustly, and We shall say: Taste the punishment of burning.[b] [182]This is for what your own hands have sent ahead, and because Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants. [183]Those who say: Allah has enjoined us that we should not believe in any messenger until he brings us an offering which is consumed by fire.[c] Say: Indeed messengers came to you before me with clear arguments and with what you demand. Why then did you try to kill them, if you are truthful?[d] [184]But if they reject *y*ou, so indeed were rejected before *y*ou messengers who came with clear arguments and scriptures and the illuminating Book. [185]Every soul must taste of death. And you will be paid your reward fully only on the day of Resurrection. Then whoever is removed far from the Fire and is made to enter the Garden, he indeed attains the object.

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a **(180)** The same idea in more general terms, as to the effect of deeds being bound to the neck, is expressed in 17:13. Every person carries the effect of his deeds with him in this life, but on the day of Resurrection that effect will become clearly visible.

b **(181)** The Jews ridiculed the poverty of the Muslims and their borrowings from the Jewish money-lenders. They also ridiculed the raising of funds for the defence of the faith by subscriptions. See also 5:64.

c **(183-1)** They were referring to the burnt offerings of the Mosaic law.

d **(183-2)** The critics are told that they even sought to kill those prophets who followed the Mosaic law, who came "with what you demand".

And the life of this world is nothing but a provision of vanities.

186 You will certainly be tried in your property and your persons. And you will certainly hear from those who have been given the Book before you and from the idolaters much abuse. And if you are patient and keep your duty, surely this is an affair of great resolution.[a] **187**And when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Book: You shall explain it to people and shall not hide it. But they threw it behind their backs and took a small price for it. And evil is what they buy. **188**Do not think that those who exult in what they have done, and love to be praised for what they have not done — do not think them to be safe from the punishment; and for them is a painful punishment. **189**And Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Powerful over all things.

Section 20: **Ultimate triumph of the faithful**

190 In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, there are surely signs for those who have understanding, **191**those who remember Allah, standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Glory be to You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.[b] **192**Our Lord, whomsoever You make enter the Fire, him You indeed bring to disgrace. And there will be no helpers for the wrongdoers. **193**Our Lord, surely we have heard a Crier calling to the faith, saying:

***a* (186)** This verse speaks of the future, in fact the distant future. The abuses which have been heaped on Islam in the past two centuries are without a parallel in the whole history of religion. The scurrilous language of Western publications, political as well as Christian, and the vituperations of their imitators elsewhere have exceeded all moral bounds. But Muslims are taught in this verse to bear all such abuse only with patience. (*Editor's Note:* Hence it is *not at all* required or even allowed in Islam that Muslims should respond by killing or physically attacking those who vilify Islam and its Holy Prophet. See also 20:130, 33:48, 73:10, 4:140 and 6:68 which lead to the same conclusion.)

***b* (191)** This chapter, like the one before it, ends with a prayer for the victory of Faith over disbelief and a prediction for its ultimate triumph. Verses 190–191 describe true believers on the one hand as remembering God in the midst of all worldly pursuits, *standing and sitting and lying on their sides*, being thus fully conscious of the Divine presence in all conditions; and, on the other, they set out for the conquest of nature with the full consciousness that *nothing has been created in vain* and that a purpose underlies the whole of creation. This is the grand object which Islam sets before its followers, to conquer self by remembrance of God and to conquer nature by pursuit of knowledge.

Believe in your Lord. So we do believe. Our Lord, grant us protection from our sins and remove our evils and make us die with the righteous. **194**Our Lord, grant us what You have promised us by Your messengers and do not disgrace us on the day of Resurrection. Surely You never fail in (Your) promise!

195 So their Lord accepted their prayer, (saying): I will not let the work of any worker among you to be lost, whether male or female; each of you is as the other. So those who fled and were driven forth from their homes and persecuted in My way and who fought and were slain,[a] I shall truly remove their evil and make them enter Gardens in which rivers flow — a reward from Allah. And with Allah is the best reward. **196**Do not let control in the land, of those who disbelieve, deceive *y*ou. **197**A brief enjoyment! Then their abode is hell. And evil is the resting-place. **198**But those who keep their duty to their Lord, for them are Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide therein; an entertainment from Allah. And what Allah has in store for the righteous is best.

199 And among the People of the Book are those who believe in Allah and (in) what has been revealed to you and (in) what has been revealed to them, humbling themselves before Allah — they do not take a small price for the messages of Allah. These it is that have their reward with their Lord. Surely Allah is Swift to take account! **200**O you who believe, be steadfast and try to excel in steadfastness and guard (the frontiers). And keep your duty to Allah that you may be successful.[b]

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a **(195)** *Editor's Note:* This shows that Muslims were first made to flee, were driven from their homes, and were persecuted for worshipping the One God, by their enemies, and it was then that they fought in battles in which they were slain. And they fought only after war was made upon them; see 22:39–40 and 2:190.

b **(200)** While victory is predicted for the Muslims, they are required to be humble in the hour of triumph, as at the close of the last chapter. The three qualities spoken of here, namely, steadfastness or endurance, trying to excel in steadfastness, and guarding, carry a temporal as well as a spiritual significance. They require, on the one hand, showing endurance in wars, excelling the enemy in endurance and to remain in readiness on the frontiers of the Muslim territory to meet the enemy, and, on the other, remaining steadfast in keeping away from evil and in keeping to obedience to God, trying to excel each other in the quality of endurance and to remain on guard against the temptations of the devil.

Chapter 4

Al-Nisā' Women

This chapter deals chiefly with the rights of women. The Battle of Uhud, dealt with in the last chapter, had left a large number of orphans and widows among the Muslims, and this chapter opens with the subject of duties towards them followed by rights of women generally. During the Battle of Uhud the hypocrites had deserted the Muslims, and this chapter then deals with the subject of hypocrisy. Following the Battle of Uhud had come the final rupture with the Jews as they had sided with the enemy, and the chapter towards its end speaks of their transgressions against the Israelite prophets and their allegations against Jesus. This chapter was mainly revealed in 4 A.H.

Section 1: **Duties of guardians to orphans**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind),[a] and spread from these two many men and women.[b] And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship. Surely Allah is ever a Watcher over you.

2 And give to orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), nor devour their property

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***a* (1-1)** How the first man was created is not stated either in the Quran or in the Hadith, nor is the Bible statement accepted that Eve was created from a rib of Adam. Muslims do not accept that man was created six thousand years ago. There are traditions stating that there were many Adams, even hundreds of thousands of Adams, before our Adam. Nor do Muslims accept that our world is the only world in this universe; one Imam is reported as saying that in God's universe there are twelve thousand systems, each bigger than our solar system. The words "Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same" only declare the unity of the human race and the equality of the male and the female. Elsewhere we are told that, for all of you, wives are created from yourselves: "And Allah has made wives for you from among yourselves" (16:72).

***b* (1-2)** "Many men and women" spring from married pairs. The verse does not necessarily refer to any parent pair of the whole of mankind. It reminds people of the strength of the ties of relationship, an idea mentioned in what follows.

(adding) to your own property. This is surely a great sin.[a] **3**And if you fear that you cannot do justice to orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two, or three, or four;[b] but if you fear that you will not do justice, then (marry) only one or what your right hands possess.[c] This is more proper that you may not do injustice. **4**And give women their dowries as a free gift. But if they of themselves are pleased to give you a portion from it, consume it with enjoyment and pleasure.[d]

5 And do not make over your property, which Allah has made

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a **(2)** The care of the orphan was one of the earliest injunctions that Islam gave, and the Prophet had always shown a deep anxiety for the welfare of the poor and the orphans; see 2:220 and 90:15–16. The subject is here introduced in detail because of the number of orphans having been greatly increased by the war.

b **(3-1)** This passage permits polygamy under certain circumstances; it does not prescribe it, nor even permit it unconditionally. This chapter was revealed to guide the Muslims under the conditions which followed the Battle of Uhud, and the last chapter deals with that battle. Now in that battle 70 men out of 700 Muslims had been killed, and this had greatly decreased the number of males. The number was likely to diminish further still in the battles which had yet to be fought. Thus many orphans would be left in the charge of widows, who would find it difficult to procure the necessary means of support. Hence in the first verse of this chapter Muslims are enjoined to respect ties of relationship. As they all came from a single ancestor, a breadth is introduced into the idea of relationship. In the second verse the care of orphans is particularly stressed. In the third verse we are told that if they could not do justice to the orphans, they might marry the widows, whose children would thus become their own children; and as the number of women was now much greater than the number of men, they were permitted to marry even two or three or four women. The Holy Prophet's own action in marrying widows corroborates this statement. Marriage with orphan girls is also sanctioned in this passage, for there were the same difficulties in their case as in the case of widows, and the words are general. See also 4:127. It is not only the preponderance of females over males that necessitates polygamy in certain cases, but there is a variety of other circumstances, not only for the moral but also for the physical welfare of society.

c **(3-2)** By *what your right hands possess* are meant the females who were taken prisoners in war. The Quran sanctions marriage with them in this verse. As for the conditions of that marriage, see 4:25.

d **(4)** It is obligatory in Islam that a "dowry" or nuptial gift should be given by the husband to the wife at the time of marriage, whether she is a free woman, an orphan girl, or a prisoner of war. So every woman begins her married life as the owner of some property, and thus marriage is the means of raising her status. The practice has, however, become more or less general to recognize dowry as a debt which the husband owes to the wife and which she can claim when she likes.

a (means of) support for you,[a] to the weak of understanding, and maintain them out of it, and clothe them and give them a good education.[b] **6**And test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage.[c] Then if you find in them maturity of intellect, make over to them their property, and do not consume it extravagantly and hastily against their growing up. And whoever is rich, let him abstain, and whoever is poor let him consume reasonably.[d] And when you make over to them their property, call witnesses in their presence. And Allah is enough as a Reckoner.

7 For men is a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and for women a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, whether it is little or much — an appointed share.[e] **8**And when relatives[f] and the orphans and the needy are present at

***a* (5-1)** By *your property* is meant the property of the orphans which is under *your* control as guardians. This verse requires guardianship in the case of all who are weak of understanding, whether minors or not. While on the one hand the Quran lays stress on the transitoriness of this life, on the other it teaches that wealth is not a thing to be despised or wasted, because it is the means of support.

***b* (5-2)** The words "give them a good education" are generally rendered as meaning "speak to them good words", but the word *qaul* (speak) is used to express all kinds of deeds. After referring to the maintenance and clothing of the orphans in a befitting manner, the Quran now calls attention to another great need of theirs which is education. From the first revelation, Islam laid stress on knowledge, *read and write* (96:1–5) being its very first message, and the Prophet spoke of the acquisition of knowledge as being as great a need of humanity as the acquisition of wealth. It is the education of orphans that the Quran refers to here, and the next verse, which enjoins guardians to "test" their wards, makes it clear.

***c* (6-1)** These words show further that the guardian is not only responsible for the education of the wards but he is also required to examine them and see what progress they have made. According to Abu Hanifah, majority is attained at eighteen years, but if maturity of intellect is not attained at eighteen, the limit may be extended. These words, moreover, show that marriage should be performed at an age after a person has attained majority, not before it, for the age of marriage is spoken of as being the age of attaining majority.

***d* (6-2)** These words allow payment of reasonable wages to the manager of a ward's estate out of the ward's property if the manager is not a rich man.

***e* (7)** Among the Arabs, women and children had no share in inheritance. Islam introduced a great reform. The principle laid down here is the basis of the Muslim law of inheritance. Children and near relatives, or failing these, distant relatives, whether males or females, are the lawful heirs, and the whole of the property does not go to the eldest son. This is in accordance with the broad principles of democracy and the brotherhood of man which Islam seeks to establish.

***f* (8)** That is, distant relatives who for any reason are not entitled to inherit.

the division, give them out of it and speak to them kind words. **9**And let those fear who, if they should leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their account; so let them observe their duty to Allah and let them speak right words. **10**Those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, they swallow only fire into their bellies. And they will burn in blazing fire.

Section 2: **Law of inheritance**

11 Allah commands you concerning your children: for the male is the equal of the portion of two females; but if there are more than two females, two-thirds of what the deceased leaves is theirs; and if there is one, for her is the half.[a] And as for his parents, for each of them is the sixth of what he leaves, if he has a child; but if he has no child and (only) his two parents inherit him, for his mother is the third; but if he has brothers, for his mother is the sixth, after (payment of) a bequest he may have bequeathed or a debt.[b] Your parents and your children, you do not know which of them is the nearer to you in benefit. This is an ordinance from Allah. Surely Allah is ever Knowing, Wise.

12 And yours is half of what your wives leave if they have no child; but if they have a child, your share is a fourth of what they leave after (payment of) any bequest they may have bequeathed or a debt; and theirs is the fourth of what you leave if you have no child, but if you have a child, their share is the eighth of what you leave after (payment of) a bequest you may have bequeathed or a debt.[c] And if a man or a woman, having no children, leaves

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a **(11-1)** By *females* are here meant the female children. When daughters are the sole heirs they are entitled to a share of two-thirds of the inheritance if there are two or more of them (the words "more than two" include the case of two daughters). If there is only one daughter she is entitled to a half.

b **(11-2)** The parents first take their respective shares, and the residue goes to the children, if there are any, failing which, the share of the parents is increased. But in case the deceased has brothers, the mother receives the same share as she would have received if the deceased had children. In all cases the payment of bequests and debts takes precedence of the shares of the heirs.

c **(12-1)** The husband or the wife (and surviving parents) take their fixed shares first, and the residue goes to the children. The two-thirds share for two or more daughters can only be given when there are neither parents, nor husband or wife; otherwise they take the residue, as in the case of sons or sons and daughters.

property to be inherited and he (or she) has a brother or a sister,[a] then for each of them is the sixth; but if they are more than that, they shall be sharers in the third after (payment of) a bequest that may have been bequeathed or a debt not injuring (others).[b] This is an ordinance from Allah, and Allah is Knowing, Forbearing.

13 These are Allah's limits. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will admit him to Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them. And this is the mighty achievement. **14**And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger and goes beyond His limits, He will make him enter fire to abide in it, and for him is a humiliating punishment.

Section 3: **Treatment of women**

15 And as for those of your women who are guilty of an indecency, call to witness against them four (witnesses) from among you; so if they bear witness, confine them to the houses until death takes them away or Allah opens a way for them.[c] **16**And as for the two of you who are guilty of it, give them both a slight punishment; then if they repent and amend, turn aside from them.[d] Surely Allah is ever Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful.

17 Repentance with Allah is only for those who do evil in ignorance, then turn (to Allah) soon, so these it is to whom Allah turns (mercifully). And Allah is ever Knowing, Wise. **18**And repentance is not for those who go on doing evil deeds, until when death comes to one of them, he says: Now I repent; nor (for) those

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a **(12-2)** This is the case where the deceased has no children but has parents, and therefore the brothers and sisters are not the only heirs and their share is only one-sixth. See 4:176 for one who leaves neither children nor parents, and therefore the brothers and the sisters take the whole of the inheritance.

b **(12-3)** The words *not injuring others* mean that debts and bequests shall not prejudice the rights of the legal heirs.

c **(15)** The word *indecency* here signifies immoral conduct short of illicit sexual intercourse, the punishment for which is given in 24:2. Women guilty of immoral conduct are curtailed of their liberty. If they mend their ways, or being unmarried they get married, a way is opened for them by Allah, and they regain their liberty.

d **(16)** The crime spoken of in this verse is the same as that in the previous verse. The committers are two, and though the masculine gender is used, it does not imply that they are both necessarily males. *Slight punishment* has been explained as meaning *reproving with the tongue.*

who die while they are disbelievers. For such We have prepared a painful punishment.[a]

19 O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to take women as heritage against (their) will.[b] Nor should you cause them hardship by taking part of what you have given them, unless they are guilty of manifest indecency.[c] And treat them kindly. Then if you hate them, it may be that you dislike a thing while Allah has placed abundant good in it. **20**And if you wish to have (one) wife in the place of another and you have given one of them a heap of gold, take nothing from it. Would you take it by slandering (her) and (doing her) manifest wrong?[d] **21**And how can you take it when you have been intimate with each other and they have taken from you a strong covenant?[e]

22 And do not marry women whom your fathers married, except what has already passed. This surely is indecent and hateful; and it is an evil way.

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a **(18)** Repentance, according to the Quran, implies an actual change in the course of one's life, not the mere utterance of words. In fact, the law stated here shows how repentance does away with sins. When the very course of a person's life is changed in respect of a particular sin, the tendency to that sin is uprooted. But those who continue doing evil until death cannot obtain the benefit of repentance, because there is no time left for them to improve themselves.

b **(19-1)** Among the pre-Islamic Arabs, when a man died his elder son or other relations had a right to possess his widow or widows, marrying them themselves if they wished, without settling a dowry on them, marrying them to others, or prohibiting them from marriage altogether. This is abolished by these words.

c **(19-2)** This passage remedies another evil. Some husbands who were dissatisfied with their wives gave them trouble in order to force them to claim a divorce and remit the dowry (i.e., the legally-due nuptial gift from the husband to the wife). This is disallowed. If the judge finds that the fault lies actually with the husband, he will not allow the dowry to be remitted in his favour. It can only be taken back if the woman is guilty of immoral conduct. In such cases, when the fault is with the woman, she may be required to return it wholly or in part.

d **(20)** Another social evil was that a husband, wanting to marry another woman instead, would accuse his wife of adultery or other gross immorality, thus compelling her to obtain a divorce by paying a large sum of money.

e **(21)** Marriage is here called a covenant or agreement between the husband and the wife. As there can be no agreement unless both parties give their consent to it, marriage in Islam can only be entered into with the free consent of the husband and the wife.

Section 4: **What women may be taken in marriage**

23 Forbidden to you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your paternal aunts, and your maternal aunts, and brother's daughters and sister's daughters, and your mothers that have suckled you, and your foster-sisters, and mothers of your wives, and your stepdaughters who are in your guardianship (born) of your wives with whom you have had sexual relations — but if you have not had sexual relations with them, there is no blame on you — and the wives of your sons who are of your own loins; and that you should have two sisters together, except what has already passed. Surely Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful,

24 And all married women except those whom your right hands possess (are forbidden);[a] (this is) Allah's ordinance to you. And lawful for you are (all women) besides those, provided that you seek (them) with your property, taking (them) in marriage, not committing fornication. Then as to those whom you profit by (by marrying), give them their dowries as appointed. And there is no blame on you about what you mutually agree after what is appointed (of dowry).[b] Surely Allah is ever Knowing, Wise.

25 And whoever among you cannot afford to marry free believing women, (let him marry) such of your believing maidens as your right hands possess. And Allah knows best your faith — you are (sprung) the one from the other. So marry them with the permission of their masters, and give them their dowries justly, they being chaste, not fornicating, nor taking lovers in secret; then if they are guilty of adultery when they are taken in marriage, they shall suffer half the punishment for free married women. This is for him

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a **(24-1)** It is thus forbidden to a man to marry a woman who is already married. An exception is made, however, regarding *those whom your right hands possess*. This expression may here mean *those whom you have lawfully taken in marriage*, and the meaning would be that *all free women are prohibited to you except those whom you have lawfully married*. Generally by this expression in the Quran are meant *those who are taken prisoners in war*. It sometimes happened that such prisoners became converts to Islam, and therefore they could not be sent back. Such women it was lawful to take in marriage, even though they might not have been divorced formally by their former husbands.

b **(24-2)** The husband and the wife are free to increase or decrease the amount of dowry fixed at the time of marriage by agreement among themselves.

among you who fears falling into evil. And that you abstain is better for you. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[a]

Section 5: **Women's rights over their earnings**

26 Allah desires to explain to you, and to guide you into the ways of those before you, and to turn to you (mercifully). And Allah is Knowing, Wise. **27**And Allah desires to turn to you (mercifully). And those who follow (their) lusts desire that you should deviate (with) a great deviation. **28**Allah desires to make light your burdens, and man is created weak.[b]

29 O you who believe, do not swallow up your property among yourselves by false means except that it be trading by your mutual consent.[c] And do not kill your people.[d] Surely Allah is ever Merciful to you. **30**And whoever does this aggressively and unjustly, We shall soon cast him into fire. And this is ever easy for Allah. **31**If you shun the great things which you are forbidden, We shall do away with your evil (inclinations)[e] and make you enter an honourable place of entering.

***a* (25)** There is no verse in the Quran or any instance in the Holy Prophet's life sanctioning what is called *concubinage*. Whenever the establishment of conjugal relations with slave-girls or women prisoners of war is mentioned, their taking in marriage is clearly laid down as a condition as in v. 3, v. 24, and this verse. Here marriage with such women is allowed under the following conditions: (1) they should be Muslims; (2) a man has not the means to marry a free woman; and (3) he fears to fall into evil.

***b* (28)** In Islam all principles of right action are stated with such completeness, devoid of unnecessary details, that the real burden of man is much lighter than in any other religion. It, moreover, points out the right way for man's freedom from the bondage of sin, and thus reduces his burden by saving him from falling into evil ways. Man being "created weak" refers to Allah's great mercy in having shown him the truth and guidance, because he could not chalk out a way for himself which was free from error.

***c* (29-1)** All illegal methods of acquiring property are forbidden. Only the seeking of gain from one another by trading by mutual consent is allowed. The passage is particularly directed to guard women's right to property, because it was women's and orphans' property that was generally swallowed up unjustly.

***d* (29-2)** This forbids the killing of *anfusa-kum*, which means *your people* or *yourselves*. In the first case, the significance is that life must also be protected; in the second case, it is an injunction against suicide which, according to the law of Islam, is a grave sin. (*Editor's Note:* This injunction also forbids sending "your people" on suicide missions to their certain death.)

***e* (31)** If a person avoids committing sins, the evil inclinations within him die also. Division of sins into *kabīra* (major) and *ṣaghīra* (minor) is baseless.

32 And do not hanker after what Allah has given some of you above others. For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn. And ask Allah of His grace. Surely Allah is ever Knower of all things. **33**And to everyone We have appointed heirs of whatever parents and near relatives leave. And as to those with whom your right hands have ratified agreements, give them their due. Surely Allah is ever Witness over all things. [a]

Section 6: **Disagreement between husband and wife**

34 Men are the maintainers of women, with what Allah has given some of them above others and with what they spend out of their wealth. So the good women are obedient (to Allah),[b] guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded.[c] And (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the beds[d] and turn them away (from wrongdoing).[e] So if they obey you,

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a **(33)** In pre-Islamic days, people entered into covenants with one another, by which they undertook to defend and inherit one another. Such inheritance was abolished by this verse, and the words *give them their due* mean *the rendering of assistance* in general.

b **(34-1)** Obedience here signifies obedience to Allah. This significance of the word is made clear by a comparison with 33:31, 33:35, and 66:5.

c **(34-2)** This refers to their *guarding the husband's rights*. The two qualifications of a good wife as given here are her obedience to God and chastity.

d **(34-3)** The word translated here as *desertion*, when used about a woman in connection with her husband, means *her rising against her husband*. This is explained by the commentators in a number of ways; for example, *her leaving the husband's place and taking up an abode which he does not like* or that *the wife resisted her husband and hated him* and *deserted him.* The remedy for her correction is that she is to be admonished, but if she persists in the wrong course, her bed is to be separated, i.e., a cessation of sexual relations.

e **(34-4)** *Editor's Note:* The words translated as "turn them away" use the term *ḍarb,* and have often been translated as "beat them". Maulana Muhammad Ali rendered them as "chastise them" and explained that very slight chastisement was allowed only in extreme cases, which should not leave an impression, and further that this permission is meant only for the crass type of people in society among whom such chastisement is acceptable. However, as he pointed out in his footnotes on verses 2:60 and 2:73, the verb *ḍarb* signifies "all kinds of actions except a few"; and apart from *striking* it is used to mean, for example, *marching on, setting forth a parable,* and *likening*. In these other senses it is commonly used in the Quran. It is used in 43:5 as meaning *to turn* (something) *away:* "Shall We then *turn away the Reminder* from you…?", which is how Maulana Muhammad Ali and many other translators have rendered this verse. This sense seems to be

do not seek a way against them. Surely Allah is ever Exalted, Great.

35 And if you fear a breach between the two, appoint an arbiter from his people and an arbiter from her people. If they both desire agreement, Allah will effect harmony between them. Surely Allah is ever Knowing, Aware.[a]

36 And serve Allah, and do not set up any partner with Him, and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbour of (your) kin and the alien neighbour,[b] and the companion in a journey and the traveller and those whom your right hands possess.[c] Surely Allah does not love such

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applicable here. Thus the meaning here would be that by admonishing and, if necessary, breaking off sexual relations, the husband should *turn the wife away from her wrong course,* or it may mean that if these measures fail he should *turn her away from himself,* i.e., divorce her. It may be added that the Quran clearly forbids a man from causing injury to his wife. In its rules for divorce, husbands are told about their wives: "retain them with kindness or let them go with kindness and do not retain them for injury" (2:231), "retain them with kindness or part from them with kindness … do not injure them in order to impose hardship upon them" (65:2, 6). In fact, only a few verses prior to v. 34 above, in v. 19, husbands have been instructed as follows about their wives: "Nor should you cause them hardship… And treat them kindly. Then if you hate them, it may be that you dislike a thing while Allah has placed abundant good in it."

***a* (35)** This verse lays down the procedure for divorce. It is not for the husband to put away his wife; it is the business of the judge to decide the case. He is required to appoint two arbiters, one belonging to the wife's family and the other to the husband's. These two arbiters will find out the facts, but their objective must be to effect a reconciliation between the parties. If all hopes of reconciliation fail, a divorce is allowed, but the final decision for divorce rests with the judge who is legally entitled to pronounce a divorce. Cases were decided in accordance with these directions in the early days of Islam.

***b* (36-1)** *The neighbour of kin* may mean *a neighbour who is a relative* or *a Muslim neighbour*, and *the alien neighbour* is either *a neighbour not related* or *a neighbour of an alien religion.* Thus the charity of Islam is not limited to one's own people or one's own co-religionists, but is extended to others also. (*Editor's Note:* The companion in a journey or the traveller, mentioned after neighbours, could belong to any people or any religion. Indeed, the parents, near of kin, orphans and needy mentioned at the beginning could also be non-Muslims and it would be a Muslim's duty to do good to them regardless of their religion.)

***c* (36-2)** By *those whom your right hands possess* are meant *all those with whose care you are entrusted*, so that it includes even animals over which one has control. While dealing with the rights of women, the Quran generalizes the law of doing good to others, so much so that it requires goodness to be extended even to a fellow-traveller. If even companions whose company is so short-lived

as are proud, boastful, **37**those who are miserly and tell people to be miserly and hide what Allah has given them out of His grace. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment — **38**and those who spend their wealth to be seen by people and do not believe in Allah nor in the Last Day. And as for him whose companion is the devil, an evil companion is he!

39 And what (harm) would it do them if they believe in Allah and the Last Day and spend (on good works) out of what Allah has given them? And Allah is ever Knower of them. **40**Surely Allah does not wrong (anyone even by) the weight of an atom; and if it is a good deed, He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward.[a]

41 But how will it be when We bring from every people a witness and bring *y*ou as a witness against these? [b] **42**On that day will those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger desire that the earth were levelled with them. And they can hide no fact from Allah.

Section 7: **Purification of the soul**

43 O you who believe, do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated till you know what you say,[c] nor after sexual intercourse — except you are merely passing by [d] — until you have bathed.

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are to be treated generously, how generous must a man be to her who is the companion of his whole life!

a **(40)** Such is the ever-recurring description of the preponderance of mercy in Divine nature: good done is always multiplied and evil nullified by God.

b **(41)** The prophet sent to a people is frequently spoken of as being *a witness* in respect of them, and by *these* are here meant the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. It appears that the people spoken of here are Muslims who disobey the Prophet, and hence the Prophet's anxiety for the later generations of his followers. This is made clear in the verse that follows in the words *those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger*. Disobedience amounts to disbelief in practice.

c **(43-1)** The prohibition against praying when intoxicated was a step towards the total prohibition of drink, for the necessity of going to prayer five times a day would leave little opportunity for indulgence in drink. The verse also makes it clear that one must know the meaning of what one says when praying to God.

d **(43-2)** *Going near prayer* may signify *going into mosques*, and the meaning in that case would be *unless you pass* (*through the mosques*) *as by a way*.

And if you are sick, or on a journey, or one of you has come from the toilet, or you have had (sexual) contact with women,[a] and you cannot find water, then resort to pure earth and wipe your faces and your hands (with it).[b] Surely Allah is ever Pardoning, Forgiving.

44 Do *y*ou not see those to whom a portion of the Book was given? They buy error and desire to make you go astray from the (right) way. **45**And Allah best knows your enemies. And Allah is sufficient as a Friend and Allah is sufficient as a Helper.

46 Some of those who are Jews alter words from their places [c] and say, We have heard and we disobey; and (say), Hear without being made to hear, and (say), *Rā'i-nā,* distorting with their tongues and slandering religion. And if they had said, We hear and we obey, and listen, and *unẓur-nā,* it would have been better for them and more upright; [d] but Allah has cursed them on account of their disbelief, so they do not believe except a little. **47**O you who have been given the Book, believe in what We have revealed, verifying what you (already) have,[e] before We destroy the leaders and turn them on their backs, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers. And the command of Allah is ever executed.

48 Surely Allah does not forgive that a partner should be set up with Him, and forgives all besides that to whom He pleases. And whoever sets up a partner with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin.[f]

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a **(43-3)** Literally, "you have touched women", which is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Many of the fine phrases used in the Quran to express this delicate relation were unknown to the Arabs.

b **(43-4)** *Tayammum* means striking both hands on pure earth, or anything containing pure dust, and then passing the hands over the face and the backs of the hands. When water is not found, or is likely to do harm, *tayammum* suffices instead of ablution before prayer.

c **(46-1)** The corruption of the previous books is constantly referred to in the Quran, and, as the words clearly show, it implies a corruption of the text as well as a false rendering of it.

d **(46-2)** See 2:104 and footnote.

e **(47)** The verification referred to here and elsewhere implies only a verification of the general principles and the prophecies contained in the earlier books.

f **(48)** *Shirk* or setting up partners with Allah is spoken of as the gravest sin. Wrong belief in false deities lowers the dignity of man. Man is made to rule nature itself and all creatures, but when he lowers himself before creatures lower than himself, he sets at naught the very purpose of his creation. It should be noted that

49Have *y*ou not seen those who attribute purity to themselves? [a] Rather, Allah purifies whom He pleases, and they will not be dealt with unjustly in the least. **50**See how they forge lies against Allah! And sufficient is this as a manifest sin.

Section 8: **Kingdom granted to Abraham's descendants**

51 Have *y*ou not seen those to whom a portion of the Book was given? They believe in sorcery and diviners [b] and say of those who disbelieve: These are better guided in the path than those who believe. **52**Those are they whom Allah has cursed. And whomever Allah curses, *y*ou will not find a helper for him. **53**Or have they a share in the kingdom? But then they would not give to people even the speck on a date-stone.[c] **54**Or do they envy the people for what Allah has given them of His grace? But indeed We have given to Abraham's children the Book and the Wisdom, and We have given them a grand kingdom.[d] **55**So some of them believe in him, and some of them turn away from him.[e] And Hell is sufficient to burn.

56 Those who disbelieve in Our Messages, We shall make them enter Fire. As often as their skins are burned, We shall change them for other skins, that they may taste the punishment. Surely Allah is ever Mighty, Wise. **57**And those who believe and do

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shirk or setting up gods with God also includes blind obedience rendered to leaders; see 9:31 and also the next footnote. It should also be noted that if a person guilty of *shirk* repents of it before his death then all his sins, including *shirk,* are forgiven because he gives a new turn to his life. Even those who die while guilty of *shirk* will, after suffering the consequences of their deeds in the after life, be received into the mercy of God.

a **(49)** These are the priests, doctors of law and monks who demanded blind obedience from their followers, and include such *ulama, shaikhs* and *pirs* among the Muslims as well.

b **(51)** These words seem to refer to the general debasement of the Jews, who believed in all kinds of enchantment, divination, and sorcery, and had long bidden farewell in practice to the pure monotheism of Moses.

c **(53)** This shows that a temporal or worldly kingdom cannot be granted to a nation which would not deal liberally with others.

d **(54)** By the *people* are meant the Arabs. The promised kingdom was still in Abraham's seed, but was now transferred from the descendants of Israel to those of Ishmael, in accordance with the covenant made with Abraham.

e **(55)** By "him" is meant the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who was now the true exponent of Abraham's religion.

good deeds, We shall make them enter Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them forever. They will have therein pure companions and We shall make them enter a pleasant shade.

58 Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to those worthy of them, and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice.[a] Surely Allah instructs you with what is excellent. Surely Allah is ever Hearing, Seeing. **59**O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day.[b] This is best and more suitable to (achieve) the end.

Section 9: **The Prophet must be obeyed**

60 Have *y*ou not seen those who assert that they believe in what has been revealed to *y*ou and what was revealed before *y*ou? They desire to seek the judgment of the devil, though they have been commanded to deny him. And the devil desires to lead them far astray. **61**And when it is said to them, Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger, *y*ou see the hypocrites turning away from *y*ou with aversion. **62**But how is it that when a misfortune befalls them on account of what their hands have already done, they come to *y*ou swearing by Allah: We desired nothing but good and concord? **63**These are they, the secrets of whose hearts Allah knows; so turn aside from them and admonish them and speak to them effective words concerning themselves.

64 And We sent no messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's command. And if they had, when they wronged themselves, come to *y*ou and asked forgiveness of Allah, and the

***a* (58)** Muslims, having been granted worldly rule, are here told to entrust the affairs of State to people who are worthy of this responsibility, while the authorities and judges so entrusted are required to judge with justice.

***b* (59)** This verse lays down three important rules in relation to the welfare of the Muslim community and to affairs of State. These are obedience to God and His Messenger in the first place; secondly, obedience to those in authority from among the Muslims; and thirdly, referring matters to God and His Messenger in cases of dispute with those in authority. God and His Messenger are thus the final authority. It is especially in matters religious that differences would arise, in which case it would be necessary to refer the matter to God and His Messenger; in other words, to the Quran and Hadith. In the case of Muslims living under non-Muslim authority, Islam requires them to abide by the laws of the land.

Messenger had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful. **65**But no, by *y*our Lord! They do not believe until they make *y*ou a judge of what is in dispute between them, then find no reluctance in their hearts as to what *y*ou decide and submit with full submission. **66**And if We had ordained for them: Lay down your lives or go forth from your homes, they would not have done it except a few of them.[a] And if they had done what they are exhorted to do, it would certainly have been better for them and more strengthening, **67**and then We would certainly have given them from Ourselves a great reward, **68**and We would certainly have guided them in the right path.

69 And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, they are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the faithful and the righteous, and a goodly company are they![b]

70 Such is the grace from Allah, and Allah is sufficient as Knower.

Section 10: **Believers must defend themselves**

71 O you who believe, take your precautions, then go forth in detachments or go forth in a body. **72**And among you is he who

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a **(66)** The Companions of the Holy Prophet had to lay down their lives in defence of their faith, and had to leave their homes for the sake of their religion. But the hypocrites at Madinah were too weak of heart to undergo such hardships. They were only required to contribute to the struggle being carried on for national defence and to obey the Prophet's orders, which was a far easier task, but they did not do even this.

b **(69)** Those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours are spoken of as belonging to four classes: (1) the prophets; (2) the truthful — those who are true in their sayings and their belief, and confirm their truth by their deeds or acting; (3) the faithful — those who bear witness to the truth both by words and deeds, and one slain in defence of his religion is included because he too gives evidence of the truth of religion by laying down his life; (4) the righteous or those who stick to the right course in all their deeds, come what may. Those who obey Allah and the Messenger are here told that they are *with* the perfect ones who belong to these four classes. Thus this verse promises to those who have not attained to perfection the company, in the life to come, of those who have attained to perfection when the former have done their best to obey God and His Messenger. It may be added that no one can become a prophet by obeying the Holy Prophet. If this were true, not only would all the truthful and the faithful and the righteous be prophets, because they perfectly obeyed Allah and His Messenger, but even all those who tried to follow them would also be prophets, which is absurd.

would hang back. Then if a misfortune befalls you, he says: Allah indeed bestowed a favour on me as I was not present with them. **73**And if bounty from Allah comes to you, he would cry, as if there were no friendship between you and him: If only I had been with them, then I should have achieved a mighty success! **74**So let those fight in the way of Allah who sell this world's life for the Hereafter. And whoever fights in the way of Allah, whether he is killed or is victorious, We shall grant him a mighty reward.

75 And what reason have you not to fight in the way of Allah, and of the weak among the men and the women and the children, who say: Our Lord, take us out of this town, whose people are oppressors, and grant us from Yourself a friend, and grant us from Yourself a helper![a] **76**Those who believe fight in the way of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of the devil. So fight against the friends of the devil; surely the struggle of the devil is ever weak.

Section 11: **Attitude of the hypocrites**

77 Have *y*ou not seen those to whom it was said: Withhold your hands, and keep up prayer and give the due charity. But when fighting is prescribed for them, then some of them fear men as they ought to fear Allah, or with a greater fear, and say: Our Lord, why have You ordained fighting for us? Would You not grant us respite for a little while?[b] Say: The enjoyment of this world is short, and the Hereafter is better for him who keeps his duty. And you will not be dealt with unjustly in the least. **78**Wherever you are, death will overtake you, though you are in towers, raised high. And if good befalls them, they say: This is from Allah; and if a misfortune befalls them, they say: This is from *y*ou. Say: All is from Allah. But what is the matter with these people that they make no effort to

a **(75)** This explains what is meant by fighting in the way of Allah. While most of the believers who had the means had escaped from Makkah, there remained those who were weak and unable to undertake a journey. These were still persecuted and oppressed at Makkah. Fighting to deliver them from the persecution of their oppressors was really fighting in the way of Allah.

b **(77)** Had there been any hope of plunder to animate the ranks of Muslims, those who loved this world most, who are here called the hypocrites, would have been foremost in fighting; but as they knew that they were fighting against odds, they considered acting on this order as equivalent to courting death, and requested to be granted a respite until they died a natural death.

understand anything? **79**Whatever good befalls *y*ou (O man), it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls *y*ou, it is from *y*ourself.[a] And We have sent *y*ou (O Prophet) to mankind as a Messenger. And Allah is sufficient as a witness.

80 Whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allah. And whoever turns away, We have not sent *y*ou as a keeper over them. **81**And they say: Obedience. But when they go out from *y*our presence, a group of them plan by night (to do) otherwise than what *y*ou say. And Allah writes down what they plan by night, so turn aside from them and trust in Allah. And Allah is sufficient as having charge of affairs. **82**Will they not then meditate on the Quran? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy.[b] **83**But if any news of security or fear comes to them, they spread it about. And if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those of them who can search out knowledge of it would have known it. And if it were not for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would certainly have followed the devil except a few. **84**Fight then in Allah's way — *y*ou are not responsible except for *y*ourself; and urge on the believers. It may be that Allah will restrain the fighting of those who disbelieve. And Allah is stronger in prowess and stronger to give exemplary punishment.[c]

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a **(79)** Good and evil, or benefits and misfortunes, proceed from Allah; but while He sends benefits from Himself, i.e., out of His beneficence, no evil or misfortune afflicts a man unless his own hands have called for it. The previous verse states that the hypocrites attributed their misfortunes to the Prophet; they are told, in the words "All is from Allah", that misfortunes were sent by Allah. This verse tells them that, though sent by Allah, the immediate cause of these misfortunes was to be found in their own doings.

b **(82)** The Quran was not written out and given on one occasion, but it continued to be delivered in small portions during twenty-three years under the most varying circumstances. But what is striking throughout the entire revelation is that it keeps up one and the same strain — absolute submission to Allah, entire trust in Him, perfect confidence of future success, a liberal view of humanity, an attitude of charity towards all nations and religions, and goodness to all alike. The spirit of the revelations to the solitary, persecuted, and rejected preacher of Makkah does not differ in these and a hundred other particulars from the spirit of the revelations to the sole temporal and spiritual monarch of Arabia.

c **(84)** The primary duty to defend Islam *lay on the Holy Prophet alone*, as against all the forces of Arabia. This shows that he never put any trust in the prowess of his followers, and his confidence was based solely on Divine help.

85 Whoever intercedes in a good cause has a share of it, and whoever intercedes in an evil cause has a portion of it. And Allah is ever Keeper over all things.[a] **86**And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with one better than it, or return it.[b] Surely Allah ever takes account of all things. **87**Allah, there is no god but He — He will certainly gather you together on the day of Resurrection, there is no doubt in it. And who is more true in word than Allah?

Section 12: **How to deal with the hypocrites**

88 Why should you, then, be two parties in relation to the hypocrites while Allah has made them return (to disbelief) for what they have earned? Do you desire to guide him whom Allah leaves in error? And whomsoever Allah leaves in error *y*ou cannot find a way for him. **89**They long that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved so that you might be on the same level; so do not take from among them friends until they flee (their homes) in Allah's way. Then if they turn back (to hostility), seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take no friend nor helper from among them, **90**except those who join a people between whom and you there is an alliance, or who come to you, their hearts shrinking from fighting you or fighting their own people. And if Allah had pleased, He would have given them power over you, so that they would have fought you. So if they withdraw from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah allows you no way against them.[c] **91**You will find others who desire to be secure from you and secure

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a **(85)** The meaning is that *he who joins himself to another and assists him, and becomes to him as one of a pair or an intercessor in doing good or evil, and thus aids him and strengthens him, partakes with him the benefit or the harm of it*. Interceding here also implies that one institutes for another a way of good or a way of evil which the other imitates, and thus becomes to him as one of a pair. The connection is clear; the Prophet made himself an example of good for others to imitate or to aid him. For the meaning of intercession, see 2:255 footnote 1.

b **(86)** A greeting is a prayer for the good of another; *taḥiyyah,* the word used for it here, meaning originally *a prayer for one's long life*. The minimum requirement is that a greeting must be returned in the same words. What is really aimed at is that a Muslim should always wish good for, or do good to, his brother, and the other is required to do greater good in return.

c **(90)** This shows clearly that even waverers were not to be killed or fought against if they refrained from fighting, though they may have gone over to disbelief after accepting Islam. The persons referred to in this verse were disbelievers and not Muslims. Note also that we have here the clear injunction that if any people offered peace, they were not to be fought against.

from their own people. Whenever they are made to return to hostility, they are plunged into it. So if they do not withdraw from you, nor offer you peace and restrain their hands, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them.[a] And against these We have given you a clear authority.

Section 13: **Murderer of a Muslim**

92 And a believer would not kill a believer except by mistake.[b] And he who kills a believer by mistake should free a believing slave, and blood-money should be paid to his people unless they forgo it as charity. But if he is from a tribe hostile to you and he is a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (is sufficient). And if he is from a tribe between whom and you there is a covenant, the blood-money should be paid to his people along with the freeing of a believing slave; but he who has not the means should fast for two months successively: a penance from Allah. And Allah is ever Knowing, Wise. **93**And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his punishment is hell, abiding in it; and Allah is furious with him and He has cursed him and prepared for him a grievous punishment.[c]

94 O you who believe, when you go forth (to fight) in Allah's way, make investigation, and do not say to anyone who offers you salutation, *Y*ou are not a believer, seeking the good of this world's life.[d] But with Allah there are abundant gains. You too

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a **(91)** *Editor's Note:* The meaning of the words "then seize them and kill them wherever you find them" is clearly shown by the preceding text: "So if they do not withdraw from you, nor offer you peace and restrain their hands". Those enemies are meant who themselves attacked the Muslims first. The words "kill them wherever you find them" in 2:191 are preceded in 2:190 by: "And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you but do not be aggressive."

b **(92)** The man who killed a believer intentionally could not be a believer. Disbelievers often made use of ruses, professing belief in Islam and thus tempting Muslims to go over to them as religious teachers, and afterwards murdering them.

c **(93)** The commentators are agreed that this verse speaks of a disbeliever who murders a believer. In fact, the word *intentionally* stands here for murdering a man because he is a believer, as this was what the disbelievers often did.

d **(94)** The original word for salutation is *salām* (meaning *peace*). The first word of the Muslim salutation stands therefore for the Muslim salutation. The Muslims were surrounded by enemies on all sides, yet they were told not to presume that every Arab tribe belonged to the enemy camp but were to make an investigation first. Even when a man belonging to an enemy tribe offered the

were such before, then Allah conferred a benefit on you; so make investigation. Surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do. **95**Those who hold back from among the believers, not disabled by injury, and those who strive hard in Allah's way with their property and their persons, are not equal. Allah has made those who strive with their property and their persons to excel those who hold back by a (high) degree. And to each Allah has promised good. And Allah has granted to those who strive above those who hold back a mighty reward — **96**(high) degrees from Him and protection and mercy. And Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

Section 14: **Muslims who remained with the enemy**

97 (As for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to themselves, (the angels) will say: What were you doing? They will say: We were weak in the earth. (The angels) will say: Was not Allah's earth spacious, so that you could have migrated in it? So these it is whose refuge is hell — and it is an evil destination.[a] **98**Except the weak from among the men and the women and the children who do not have the means, nor can they find a way (to escape); **99**so these, it may be that Allah will pardon them. And Allah is ever Pardoning, Forgiving. **100**And whoever flees in Allah's way, he will find in the earth many a place of escape and abundant resources. And whoever goes forth from his home fleeing to Allah and His Messenger, then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah. And Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

Section 15: **Prayer when fighting**

101 And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the prayer, if you fear that those who disbelieve will give you trouble.[b] Surely the disbelievers are an open enemy

Muslim salutation, to show that he was a Muslim, he was to be taken as a brother Muslim and could not be dealt with as an enemy. Incidentally, it lays down the principle that no Muslim can be called a *kāfir,* not even the man whose claim to Islam is borne out only by offering the Muslim salutation.

a **(97)** By *those who were unjust to themselves* are meant persons who were convinced of the truth of Islam, but chose to remain among the disbelievers, who did not allow them to give expression to their beliefs, despite having the means to join the Muslims and avow Islam openly.

b **(101)** The prayer service on a journey is shorter than the ordinary prayer

to you. **102**And when *y*ou are among them and lead the prayer for them, let a group of them stand up with *y*ou, and let them take their arms. Then when they have performed their prostration, let them go to your rear, and let another group who have not prayed come forward and pray with *y*ou, and let them take their precautions and their arms. Those who disbelieve long that you may neglect your arms and your baggage, that they may attack you with a sudden united attack. And there is no blame on you, if you are inconvenienced on account of rain or if you are sick, to put away your arms; and take your precautions. Surely Allah has prepared a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers.[a] **103**So when you have finished the prayer, remember Allah standing and sitting and reclining. But when you are secure (from danger), keep up (regular) prayer. Prayer indeed has been enjoined on the believers at fixed times.[b] **104**And do not be weak-hearted in pursuit of the enemy. If you suffer, they (too) suffer as you suffer, and you hope from Allah what they do not hope. And Allah is ever Knowing, Wise.

Section 16: **Hypocrites are dishonest**

105 Surely We have revealed the Book to *y*ou with truth that *y*ou may judge between people by means of what Allah has taught *y*ou. And do not be one pleading the cause of the dishonest,[c]

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service in the *Ẓuhr* (midday), *'Aṣr* (afternoon) and *'Iṯhā'* (night) prayers, but the shortening of prayer as mentioned in this verse is quite different from the ordinary shorter service of the journey, and its details are given in the next verse.

***a* (102)** This verse and the previous one show the importance of prayer and of offering prayer in congregation in Islam, which could not be neglected even on the field of battle.

***b* (103)** The hours of prayer were fixed by the Prophet under Divine guidance, and the observance of the hours of prayer is an essential part of the due observance of prayer. It is this feature of the Islamic prayer which makes it a unique force in the unification of the human race.

***c* (105)** The occasion of the revelation of these verses was a dispute between a Muslim and a Jew, in which judgment was given by the Prophet against the Muslim. It was a time when every Muslim hand was sorely needed for the defence of Islam, and a verdict against a man supported by his whole tribe meant the loss of that tribe. But such considerations did not carry any weight with the Prophet. Thus these verses lay down the broad principle that dishonesty must be punished, and the balance of justice must be held equal between Muslims and non-Muslims and between friends and foes.

106and ask the forgiveness of Allah.[a] Surely Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. **107**And do not contend on behalf of those who act unfaithfully to their souls. Surely Allah does not love him who is treacherous, sinful: **108**They seek to hide from people and they cannot hide from Allah, and He is with them when they counsel by night matters which do not please Him. And Allah ever encompasses what they do.[b] **109**Look! You are they who may contend on their behalf in this world's life, but who will contend with Allah on their behalf on the day of Resurrection, or who will have charge of their affairs?

110 And whoever does evil or wrongs his soul, then asks forgiveness of Allah, will find Allah Forgiving, Merciful. **111**And whoever commits a sin, commits it only against himself. And Allah is ever Knowing, Wise. **112**And whoever commits a fault or a sin, then accuses of it one innocent, he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a slander and a manifest sin.

Section 17: **Secret counsels of the hypocrites**

113 And if it were not for Allah's grace upon *y*ou and His mercy, a group of them had certainly aimed to ruin *y*ou. And they ruin only themselves, and they cannot harm *y*ou in any way. And Allah has revealed to *y*ou the Book and the Wisdom, and taught *y*ou what *y*ou did not know, and Allah's grace on *y*ou is very great. **114**There is no good in most of their secret counsels except (in) him who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people. And whoever does this, seeking Allah's pleasure, We shall give him a mighty reward. **115**And whoever acts hostilely to the Messenger after guidance has become manifest to him and follows other than the way of the believers, We turn him to that to which he (himself) turns and make him enter hell; and it is an evil destination.[c]

***a* (106)** The injunction in this as well as the previous verse is meant for every Muslim who is called upon to act as a judge. He must be strictly just as between his own people and aliens, and must further ask the protection of Allah from being guilty of an act of injustice, even unknowingly.

***b* (108)** Those who supported the guilty man are condemned here as hypocrites. The same subject is continued in the verses that follow.

***c* (115)** This verse clearly speaks of the hypocrites, who followed *a way other than the way of the believers*. Only a distortion of the words could make

Section 18: **Idolatry condemned**

116 Surely Allah does not forgive setting up partners with Him, and He forgives all besides this to whom He pleases. And whoever sets up a partner with Allah, he indeed goes far astray. **117**Besides Him they call on nothing but female divinities [a] and they call on nothing but a rebellious devil, **118**whom Allah has cursed. And he said: Certainly I will take of Your servants an appointed portion; **119**and certainly I will lead them astray and excite in them vain desires and bid them so that they will slit the ears of the cattle,[b] and bid them so that they will alter Allah's creation.[c] And whoever takes the devil for a friend, forsaking Allah, he indeed suffers a manifest loss. **120**He promises them and excites vain desires in them. And the devil promises them only to deceive. **121**These — their refuge is hell, and they will find no way of escape from it.

122 And those who believe and do good, We shall make them enter Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them forever. It is Allah's promise, in truth. And who is more truthful in word than Allah? **123**It will not be in accordance with your vain desires nor the vain desires of the People of the Book. Whoever does evil, will be recompensed for it and will not find for himself besides Allah a friend or a helper.[d] **124**And whoever does good deeds, whether male or female, and is a believer — these will enter the Garden, and they will not be dealt with unjustly in the least. **125**And who is better

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them signify that it was a sin to differ with the majority of the Muslims on any question of religion.

***a* (117)** The word translated here as "female divinities" can signify *inanimate things*, such as trees and stones and wood, which they worshipped, as well as *idols* because they named the idols as *females.*

***b* (119-1)** The practice of slitting or cutting off the ear of certain animals was a prevalent form of polytheism in Arabia, for such an animal was looked upon as devoted to certain idols.

***c* (119-2)** A comparison with 30:30 will show clearly that by *Allah's creation* is here meant the *religion of Allah*, the natural religion of man. By the devil's changing the creation of Allah is therefore meant the changing of the natural religion of man which requires obedience to Allah and His laws. Some commentators understand by changing the creation of Allah *the using of His created things for an object other than that for which they were created*, and worshipping objects such as the sun, etc., which were really created to be subservient to man.

***d* (123)** *Editor's Note:* Divine reward is not bestowed upon anyone in accordance with their vain desires, whether they are Muslims or Jews or Christians. People are judged by their deeds, and rewarded or punished accordingly.

in religion than he who submits himself entirely to Allah while doing good (to others) and follows the faith of Abraham, the upright one? And Allah took Abraham for a friend. **126**And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And Allah ever encompasses all things.

Section 19: **Equitable dealings with orphans and widows**

127 And they ask *y*ou a decision about women. Say: Allah makes known to you His decision concerning them; and what is recited to you in the Book is concerning widowed women, whom you do not give what is appointed for them, while you are not inclined to marry them, nor to the weak among children, and that you should deal justly with orphans. And whatever good you do, Allah is surely ever Knower of it.[a] **128**And if a woman fears ill-usage from her husband or desertion, there is no blame on the two of them if they effect a reconciliation between them. And reconciliation is better. And greed is met with in (people's) minds. And if you do good (to others) and keep your duty, surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do. **129**And you cannot do justice between wives, even though you wish (it), but do not be disinclined (from one) with total disinclination, so that you leave her in suspense. And if you are reconciled and keep your duty, surely Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. **130**And if they separate, Allah will render them both free from want out of His ampleness. And Allah is ever Ample-giving, Wise.

131 And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And certainly We charged those who were

a **(127)** It is stated here that a decision regarding the doing of good to women, to weak children and to orphans has already been given (see 4:1–10). The words "and what is recited to you in the Book is concerning widowed women, whom you do not give what is appointed for them while you are not inclined to marry them" refer to 4:3. The meaning is that the order given in 4:3 in the words "if you fear that you cannot do justice to orphans, marry such women as seem good to you" relates to orphans of the women (or to widows) whom their share in inheritance was denied, both their share and the share of their orphan children, nor were people inclined to marry them owing to the burden which they brought with them in the shape of their children. So the permission was given that they may marry such women, even up to four. Widows and their orphaned children used to receive no share of inheritance. The Quran brought about a great change: it required the giving of inheritance both to women and their orphaned children, and it also recommended that such women should be taken in marriage.

given the Book before you, and (We also charge) you, to keep your duty to Allah. And if you disbelieve, surely to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And Allah is ever Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy. [132]And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as having charge of affairs. [133]If He please, He will take you away, O people, and bring others. And Allah is ever Powerful to do that. [134]Whoever desires the reward of this world — then with Allah is the reward of this world and the Hereafter. And Allah is ever Hearing, Seeing.

Section 20: **Hypocrisy condemned**

135 O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah, even if it is against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives — whether he is rich or poor, Allah has a better right over them both.[a] So do not follow (your) low desires, that you deviate. And if you distort (the truth) or turn away (from it), surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do.

136 O you who believe, believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Book which He has revealed to His Messenger and the Book which He revealed before. And whoever disbelieves in Allah and His angels and His Books and His messengers and the Last Day, he indeed strays far away. [137]Those who believe then disbelieve, again believe and again disbelieve, then increase in disbelief, Allah will never forgive them nor guide them in the (right) way.[b] [138]Give news to the hypocrites that for them is a painful punishment — [139]those who take disbelievers for friends rather than believers. Do they seek for might from them? Might surely belongs wholly to Allah.

140 And indeed He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's messages disbelieved in and mocked at, do not sit with them until they enter into some other discourse, for then

***a* (135)** "Allah has a better right over them" means that *they should be dealt with justly*. Thus, neither ties of kinship and love nor considerations of fear, favour, or compassion should make one swerve a hair's breadth from the truth.

***b* (137)** Allah's not guiding them is the consequence of their own actions. They wavered first, but in the end became firm in disbelief.

indeed you would be like them.[a] Surely Allah will gather together the hypocrites and the disbelievers all in hell — [141]those who wait (for misfortunes) for you. Then if you have a victory from Allah, they say: Were we not with you? And if there is a chance for the disbelievers, they say: Did we not prevail over you and defend you from the believers? So Allah will judge between you on the day of Resurrection. And Allah will by no means give the disbelievers a way against the believers.

Section 21: **End of the hypocrites**

142 The hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, and He will pay them back their deceit. And when they stand up for prayer, they stand up sluggishly — they do it only to be seen by people and they remember Allah but little, [143]wavering between that (and this) — (belonging) neither to these nor to those.[b] And whomsoever Allah leaves in error, *y*ou will not find a way for him. [144]O you who believe, do not take the disbelievers for friends instead of the believers. Do you desire to give Allah a manifest proof against yourselves? [145]The hypocrites are surely in the lowest depths of the Fire, and *y*ou will find no helper for them, [146]except those who repent and amend and hold fast to Allah and are sincere in their obedience to Allah — these are with the believers. And Allah will soon grant the believers a mighty reward. [147]Why should Allah punish you if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is ever Multiplier of rewards,[c] Knowing.

148 Allah does not love the public utterance of hurtful speech, except by one who has been wronged.[d] And Allah is ever

Part 6

***a* (140)** See 6:68 which was revealed at Makkah. Muslims are told to leave the assembly where truth is derided. Criticism is quite a different thing and a Muslim should always be ready to meet any criticism of his religion. (*Editor's Note:* Thus the response when faced with mere ridicule of Islam is to withdraw, temporarily, from that company of people and *rejoin them later* when they stop their mocking. It is therefore entirely wrong to believe that Muslims are required to attack physically, still less kill, those who deride their religion.)

***b* (143)** The reference in "that and this" is to belief and disbelief.

***c* (147)** The word *shākir,* usually meaning *thankful,* when used as an attribute of the Divine Being signifies One Who multiplies rewards to His servants.

***d* (148)** The use of defamatory speech of every kind regarding others is strictly forbidden, but justification for it may exist in case a person has in some way been wronged.

Hearing, Knowing. **149**If you do good openly or keep it secret or pardon an evil, Allah surely is ever Pardoning, Powerful.[a]

150 Those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and desire to make a distinction between Allah and His messengers and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others; and desire to take a course in between — **151**these are truly disbelievers; and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment. **152**And those who believe in Allah and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them, to them He will grant their rewards. And Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.[b]

Section 22: **Transgressions of the Jews**

153 The People of the Book ask *y*ou to bring down to them a Book from heaven; indeed they demanded of Moses a greater thing than that, for they said: Show us Allah manifestly. So destructive punishment overtook them on account of their wrongdoing. Then they took the calf (for a god), after clear signs had come to them, but We pardoned this. And We gave Moses clear authority. **154**And We raised the mountain above them at their covenant. And We said to them: Enter the gate submissively. And We said to them: Do not violate the Sabbath; and We took from them a firm covenant.

155 Then for their breaking their covenant and their disbelief in the messages of Allah and their killing the prophets unjustly and their saying, Our hearts are securely covered; no, Allah has sealed them on account of their disbelief, so they do not believe but a little; [c] **156**and for their disbelief and for their uttering against Mary a grievous slander; [d] **157**and for their saying: We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah, and they did

***a* (149)** If you pardon the evil which anyone has done to you, Allah will pardon your evils, and grant you even good reward; He is not only Pardoning, but also Powerful to grant good reward.

***b* (152)** To make distinction between Allah and His messengers means to believe in one and not in the other. Islam requires the acceptance of all prophets who were raised for the regeneration of mankind, and hence a denial of any one of the prophets named in the Quran takes a person out of the category of believers and places him among the disbelievers.

***c* (155)** The incidents referred to in verses 153–155 have been mentioned in detail in 2:51–71; see the footnotes there.

***d* (156)** The slander referred to was that Mary was guilty of fornication.

not kill him, nor did they cause his death on the cross,[a] but he was made to appear to them as such.[b] And certainly those who differ concerning it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture, and they did not kill him for certain; **158**rather, Allah exalted him in His presence.[c] And Allah is ever Mighty, Wise. **159**And there is none of the People of the Book but will believe in this before his death; and on the day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.[d]

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a **(157-1)** The words used here do not negative that Jesus was nailed to the cross; they negative his having expired on the cross as a result of being nailed to it. That Jesus died a natural death is plainly stated in 5:117. The Gospels contain clear testimony showing that Jesus Christ escaped death on the cross. For example, Jesus remained on the cross for a few hours only (Mark 15:25, John 19:14) but death by crucifixion was always slow. When the side of Jesus was pierced, blood rushed out and this was a certain sign of life (John 19:34). Jesus was not buried but was given into the charge of a wealthy disciple of his, who lavished care on him and put him in a spacious tomb hewn in the side of a rock (Mark 15:46). When the tomb was seen on the third day, the stone was found to have been removed from its mouth (Mark 16:4), which would not have been the case if there had been a supernatural rising. Jesus Christ prayed the whole night before his arrest to be saved from the accursed death on the cross, and he also asked his disciples to pray for him. He seems to have even received a promise from God to be saved, and it was to this promise that he referred when he cried out on the cross: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" The statements made in the Quran corroborate the testimony found in the Gospels. Jesus did not die on the cross, nor was he killed as were the two thieves who were crucified with him, but to people he appeared as if he were dead.

b **(157-2)** These words may bear two interpretations: *he was made to be like it to them* or *the matter was made dubious to them*. The story that someone else was made to resemble Jesus is not borne out by the words of the Quran, which could only mean, if an object were mentioned, that Jesus was made to resemble someone, not that someone was made to resemble Jesus.

c **(158)** For "exaltation" see 3:55 footnote 2. Being exalted in the Divine presence was opposed to being killed on the cross. Deuteronomy 21:23 explains this, for there we have, *he who is hanged is accursed of God*. If Jesus had died on the cross he would have been accursed; hence the statement made here — he was not killed on the cross and accursed but he was exalted in the Divine presence.

d **(159)** Both Jews and Christians necessarily believe in the death of Jesus on the cross, while according to the Quran they have really no sure knowledge of it. The belief of the Jews is that since Jesus died on the cross he was accursed of God, and hence he cannot be a prophet. Following quite a different line of argument, Christians believe that Jesus died on the cross and was accursed, but that unless Jesus were accursed he could not take away the sins of those that believe in him. Hence the belief of both Jews and Christians is that Jesus died on the

160 So for the wrongdoing of the Jews, We forbade them the good things which had been made lawful for them, and for their hindering many (people) from Allah's way. **161**And for their taking usury — though indeed they were forbidden it — and their devouring the property of people falsely. And We have prepared for the disbelievers from among them a painful punishment. **162**But the firm in knowledge among them and the believers believe in what has been revealed to *y*ou and what was revealed before *y*ou, and those who keep up prayer and give the due charity and the believers in Allah and the Last Day — these it is to whom We shall give a mighty reward.

Section 23: **Previous revelation and the Quran**

163 Surely We have revealed to *y*ou as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave to David a scripture. **164**And (We sent) messengers We have mentioned to *y*ou before and messengers We have not mentioned to *y*ou. And to Moses Allah addressed His word, speaking (to him) — **165**messengers, bearers of good news [a] and warners, so that the people may have no plea against Allah after the (coming of) messengers. And Allah is ever Mighty, Wise. **166**But Allah bears witness by what He has revealed to *y*ou that He has revealed it with His knowledge, and the angels (also) bear witness. And Allah is sufficient as a witness.

167 Those who disbelieve and hinder (others) from Allah's way, they indeed have gone astray, straying far. **168**Those who disbelieve and act unjustly, Allah will never forgive them, nor guide them to a path, **169**except the path of hell, to abide in it for a long time. And that is easy to Allah.

170 O mankind, the Messenger has indeed come to you with truth from your Lord, so believe, it is better for you. And if you

cross, and the meaning of the verse is clear, i.e., every Jew and Christian, despite having no sure knowledge at all, must believe before his death that Jesus died on the cross.

a **(165)** The good news which these messengers brought relates as much to the peace and happiness which is granted to the righteous as to the advent of one who, coming at the end, should unite the qualifications of all the prophets in his own person, and accordingly make the nations of the earth as one nation.

disbelieve, then surely to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And Allah is ever Knowing, Wise. **171**O People of the Book, do not exaggerate in the matter of your religion nor speak anything about Allah but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is only a messenger of Allah and His word[a] which He communicated to Mary and a mercy from Him.[b] So believe in Allah and His messengers. And do not say, Three.[c] Refrain (from it), it is better for you. Allah is only one God. Far be it from His glory to have a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And sufficient is Allah as having charge of affairs.

Section 24: **Prophethood of Jesus**

172 The Messiah does not disdain to be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him. And whoever disdains His service and is proud, He will gather them all together to Himself. **173**Then as for those who believe and do good, He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace. And as for those who disdain and are proud, He will punish them with a painful punishment, and they will find for themselves besides Allah no friend nor helper.

174 O people, manifest proof has indeed come to you from your Lord and We have sent down to you a clear light. **175**Then as for those who believe in Allah and hold fast by Him, He will admit them to His mercy and grace, and guide them to Himself on a right path.

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a **(171-1)** *Kalima*, or *word*, is here equivalent to *prophecy*, in which sense it is frequently used in the Quran. Jesus is called a *prophecy* because he was born in accordance with a prophecy from God.

b **(171-2)** *Rūḥ* also means *mercy,* as translated here. It also signifies *inspiration* or *Divine revelation,* and if this significance is adopted it would be an explanation of the foregoing words, i.e., His prophecy which He communicated to Mary. Even if we take *spirit* to be the meaning of the word *rūḥ*, it does not take Jesus beyond the limits of mortality, because according to the Quran the spirit of God is breathed into every human being (32:9). Moreover, the words used here can only mean *a spirit from Him* and not *the* spirit from Him.

c **(171-3)** The doctrine of Trinity is plainly rejected here. There are not three persons in Godhead, but only one: *Allah is only one God*. The Quran nowhere says that the Christian Trinity is formed of Jesus, Mary, and God, although it no doubt refers to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the worship of Mary in 5:116.

176 They ask *y*ou for a decision. Say: Allah gives you a decision concerning the person who has neither parents nor children. If a man dies (and) he has no son and he has a sister, hers is half of what he leaves, and he shall be her heir if she has no son. But if there are two (sisters), they shall have two-thirds of what he leaves. And if there are (both) brothers and sisters, then for the male is the like of the portion of two females. Allah makes clear to you, in case you go astray. And Allah is Knower of all things.[a]

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a **(176)** The rule given here supplements the law of inheritance as given at the commencement of this chapter. Here there are neither children nor parents and therefore the whole of the inheritance goes to the brothers and the sisters.

Reversion to the law of inheritance just after speaking of Jesus has perhaps a deeper meaning. It is a fact that no prophet appeared among the Israelites after Jesus, and therefore his death really left Israel without a spiritual head who should rise to the eminence of prophethood. The spiritual kingdom which was promised to Abraham, and which hitherto remained in the house of Israel, was now taken from the Israelites and made over to the brother nation, the Ishmaelites. This would also explain the words addressed to Moses: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren" (Deuteronomy, 18:15). Here, the spiritual inheritance is clearly made to devolve on the brethren of the Israelites, i.e., the Ishmaelites, and thus *from your midst* is clearly explained as meaning *from the midst of your brethren*. Moses saw clearly that the Israelites would lose their title to the inheritance of the spiritual kingdom before the advent of the Prophet who was to be his *like*. And Jesus made the same clear in different words when he said, addressing the Israelites: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt., 21:43).

Chapter 5

Al-Mā'idah Food

The name of this chapter refers to the demand for food, or physical sustenance, by the followers of Jesus and the granting of Jesus' prayer for his earlier and later followers (verses 112–115). Not only physical food, but God sent down for them spiritual food in the form of the Quran, which "perfected" religion (v. 3). The chapter deals with the deviation of the Jews and the Christians from the truth and their hostility towards Islam. It contains directions for Muslims on several points and warns them to avoid the errors into which previous nations fell. It ends with a refutation of the doctrine of Jesus' divinity and gives hope of the deliverance of his followers from this wrong belief. This chapter was mainly revealed in 5–7 A.H. However, v. 3, speaking of the perfection of religion in Islam, was revealed during the Holy Prophet's last pilgrimage to Makkah in 10 A.H.

Section 1: **Perfection of religion in Islam**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O you who believe, fulfil the obligations.[a] The cattle quadrupeds are allowed to you except what is recited to you, not violating the prohibition against game when you are on the pilgrimage.[b] Surely Allah orders what He pleases.

2 O you who believe, do not violate the signs of Allah,[c] nor the Sacred Month, nor the offerings, nor the victims with garlands,[d] nor

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***a* (1-1)** Respect for all *covenants, contracts, agreements* and *treaties*, all of which are included in the significance of the word *'uqūd*, and also of all Divine ordinances, is the very first necessity of social relations. The word includes *the covenants imposed by God as well as the mutual agreements made by people*. Thus respect for *law*, religious as well as temporal, is taught here.

***b* (1-2)** The prohibition against killing game during pilgrimage is mentioned in connection with the security of the Ka'bah in verses 94–96, so that even wild animals are secure during this time.

***c* (2-1)** The term *sha'ā'ir Allāh* signifies all duties imposed by God on people. Rites and ceremonies in connection with the pilgrimage and places where these ceremonies are performed are also known by this name.

***d* (2-2)** *Hady* or "offering" means *what is driven* (to Makkah). *Qalā'id* or "victims with garlands" means *necklaces* or *what is put upon the neck of an animal* that is brought as an offering to Makkah for sacrifice. Only camels are made to wear garlands, while *hady* includes all kinds of animals brought as offering.

those repairing to the Sacred House seeking the grace and pleasure of their Lord. And when you are free from pilgrimage obligations, then hunt. And do not let hatred of a people — because they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque — incite you to transgress.[a] And help one another in righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression, and keep your duty to Allah.[b] Surely Allah is Severe in retribution.

3 Forbidden to you is what dies of itself, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that on which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked, and the strangled (animal), and that beaten to death, and that killed by a fall, and that killed by goring with the horn, and what wild beasts have eaten — except what you slaughter; [c] and what is sacrificed on stones set up (for idols),[d] and (it is forbidden) that you seek to divide by arrows; [e] that is a transgression. This day have those who disbelieve despaired of your religion, so do not fear them, and fear Me. This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion.[f] But whoever is compelled by hunger, not inclining wilfully to sin, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

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a **(2-3)** The principle laid down here requires from Muslims equal treatment for all nations, for those whom we hate as well as for those whom we love. Only this principle of Islam can serve as the basis for an international code for the modern world and an international law.

b **(2-4)** *Editor's Note:* Muslims ought only to cooperate with one another in matters of goodness, and are forbidden to help each other in wrongdoing against others. This injunction prohibits the evils of blind patriotism and unconditional support for one's own people even when they commit injustices against others.

c **(3-1)** The meaning is that if an animal partly eaten by wild beasts is found while yet alive, and is slaughtered in the proper manner, its flesh is allowed.

d **(3-2)** Certain stones were set up around the Ka'bah, over or near which it was customary for the idolaters to kill animals as offerings to certain idols.

e **(3-3)** This prohibits dividing the flesh of slaughtered animals by means of certain arrows with which the idolatrous Arabs played a game of chance.

f **(3-4)** This verse was revealed towards the close of the Holy Prophet's life, and it is held by all authorities that no precept was revealed after this. It is a clear testimony to the perfection of religion in Islam, no such claim being made by any other book or religion. Just before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, Jesus had said: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth" (John, 16:12–13). The Prophet Muhammad was thus the last of the prophets, because religion being perfected, no prophet was needed after him.

4 They ask *y*ou as to what is allowed them. Say: The good things are allowed to you, and what you have taught the beasts and birds of prey, training them to hunt — you teach them of what Allah has taught you; so eat of what they catch for you and mention the name of Allah over it; and keep your duty to Allah.[a] Surely Allah is Swift in reckoning. **5**This day (all) good things are made lawful for you. And the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them.[b] And so are the chaste from among the believing women and the chaste from among those who have been given the Book before you, when you give them their dowries, taking (them) in marriage, not fornicating nor taking them for lovers in secret.[c] And whoever denies faith, his work indeed is fruitless; and in the Hereafter he is among the losers.

Section 2: **Duty of uprightness**

6 O you who believe, when you rise up for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads, and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. And if you are under an obligation,[d] then wash (your body). And if you are sick, or on a journey, or one of you has come from the toilet, or you have had (sexual)

a **(4)** Game killed by means of beasts and birds of prey taught to hunt is allowed. When the beast or the bird is sent after the prey, the name of Allah should be mentioned. Game killed by an arrow or by a shot is allowed, subject to the same condition. If the game is not killed before it falls into the hands of the hunter, it should be slaughtered; if it is already killed, it is lawful in that condition.

b **(5-1)** Thus animals slaughtered by the Jews or the Christians are allowed when slaughtered in the name of God. However, any food which is clearly prohibited cannot become lawful because it is offered by a Jew or a Christian.

c **(5-2)** In Islam intermarriages with idol-worshippers are totally prohibited (2:221), but in the case of a people whose religion is based on a revealed book, in which category fall almost all the nations of the world, the taking of their women in marriage is expressly allowed. The giving away of Muslim women in marriage to followers of other religions is not, however, expressly mentioned, and practice from the earliest times is against it. (*Editor's Note:* A Jewish or Christian woman marrying a Muslim man would enter a household where her prophets and scriptures are believed in; while in the converse case a Muslim woman would be entering a household where the Prophet Muhammad and the Quran are not believed in. Also note that this verse allows a Muslim man to marry a woman of the People of the Book *only* under the condition that the two of them follow the same code of sexual morality as would apply if both of them were Muslims.)

d **(6)** I.e., to perform a total ablution or bath after sexual intercourse.

contact with women, and you cannot find water, then resort to pure earth and wipe your faces and your hands with it. Allah does not desire to place a burden on you but He wishes to purify you, and that He may complete His favour on you, so that you may give thanks.

7 And remember Allah's favour on you and His covenant with which He bound you when you said: We have heard and we obey. And keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is Knower of what is in the hearts.

8 O you who believe, be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice; and do not let hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just; that is nearer to observance of duty. And keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is Aware of what you do. **9**Allah has promised to those who believe and do good deeds: For them is forgiveness and a mighty reward. **10**And those who disbelieve and reject Our messages, such are the companions of the flaming fire.

11 O you who believe, remember Allah's favour on you when a people had determined to stretch out their hands against you, but He withheld their hands from you; and keep your duty to Allah. And on Allah let the believers rely.[a]

Section 3: **Christian violation of the Covenant**

12 And certainly Allah made a covenant with the Children of Israel, and We raised up among them twelve chieftains.[b] And Allah said: Surely I am with you. If you keep up prayer and give the due charity and believe in My messengers and assist them and offer to Allah a goodly gift, I will certainly cover your evil deeds, and make you enter Gardens in which rivers flow. But whoever among you disbelieves after that, he indeed strays from the right way. **13**But on account of their breaking their covenant We cursed them and hardened their hearts. They alter words from their places and neglect a portion of what they were reminded of. And *y*ou will always discover treachery in them excepting a few of them — so pardon them and forgive. Surely Allah loves those who do good (to others). **14**And with those who say, We are Christians, We made a

***a* (11)** The enemies of Islam tried to take away the life of the Holy Prophet and to exterminate the Muslims on occasions too numerous to mention.

***b* (12)** See the Bible, Book of Numbers, 1:5–16 and 1:44.

covenant,[a] but they neglected a portion of what they were reminded of, so We stirred up enmity and hatred among them to the day of Resurrection.[b] And Allah will soon inform them of what they did.

15 O People of the Book, indeed Our Messenger has come to you, making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book and passing over much.[c] Indeed, there has come to you from Allah a Light and a clear Book,[d] **16**by which Allah guides such as follow His pleasure into the ways of peace, and brings them out of darkness into light by His will, and guides them to the right path.

17 They indeed disbelieve who say: Surely, Allah — He is the Messiah, son of Mary. Say: Who then could control anything as against Allah when He wished to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother and all those on the earth?[e] And Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. He creates what He pleases. And Allah is Powerful over all things.

18 And the Jews and the Christians say: We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones.[f] Say: Why does He then punish you for your sins? Rather, you are mortals from among those whom He has created. He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom

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a **(14-1)** The covenant, made through Jesus, was to accept the Prophet when he appeared. Jesus told his followers: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak" (John, 16:12–13).

b **(14-2)** The prophecy that there shall always be hatred and enmity between the various Christian peoples has proved true in all ages, and never more clearly than in modern times with the World Wars in Europe.

c **(15-1)** There were many truths which the Jews and the Christians had lost, their scriptures not having remained free from corruption, and many which were in their books but which they did not act upon. Those which were of permanent value were revealed in the Quran, but others — referred to in *passing over much* — that only suited the requirements of the earlier times were not now needed.

d **(15-2)** The Light is the Holy Prophet, and the Book, the Quran.

e **(17)** The meaning is that Jesus and Mary, and all those who were then on the earth, tasted equally of death; hence Jesus was a mortal and not God.

f **(18-1)** In the Gospels it is said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew, 5:9). The Christians think they are the people spoken of here. The Jews considered themselves as the favourite nation, because they thought they were the only nation chosen by God for the gift of Divine revelation, to the exclusion of all other nations of the world.

He pleases.[a] And Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and to Him is the eventual coming. **19**O People of the Book, indeed Our Messenger has come to you explaining to you after a cessation of the messengers,[b] in case you say: No bearer of good news came to us nor a warner. So indeed a bearer of good news and a warner has come to you. And Allah is Powerful over all things.

Section 4: **Israelites' violation of the Covenant**

20 And when Moses said to his people: My people, remember the favour of Allah to you when He raised prophets among you and made you kings and gave you what He did not give to any other of the nations.[c] **21**My people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has ordained for you and do not turn your backs, for then you will turn back losers. **22**They said: Moses, in it are a powerful people, and we shall not enter it until they go out from it; if they go out from it, then surely we will enter. **23**Two men of those who feared, on whom Allah had bestowed a favour, said: Enter upon them by the gate, for when you enter it you will surely be victorious; and put your trust in Allah, if you are believers.[d] **24**They said: Moses, we will never enter it so long as they are in it; go therefore *y*ou and *y*our Lord, and fight; surely here we sit. **25**He said: My Lord, I have control of none but my own self and my brother; so distinguish between us and the transgressing people. **26**He said: It will surely be forbidden to them for forty years — they will wander about in the land.[e] So do not grieve for the transgressing people.

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a **(18-2)** It is in accordance with Divine laws that forgiveness and punishment are exercised, and the alleged atonement of Jesus brought no change in this.

b **(19)** Several centuries had elapsed since the appearance of any prophet in any country when the great Arabian Prophet made his appearance. No nation in the world claims the appearance of any messenger in it between the advent of Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The world was, as it were, preparing itself for the advent of the greatest of all prophets, who was to be a messenger to all the nations of the world.

c **(20)** The reference need not be to the earlier history of the Israelites, but to their history as dating from the time of Moses, for the advent of Moses had brought about an entire change both in their spiritual and political status.

d **(23)** These were Joshua and Caleb. See Numbers, 14:6–9.

e **(26)** See Numbers, 14:23. The forty years spoken of here represent the life of that generation.

Section 5: **Cain and Abel**

27 And relate to them with truth the story of the two sons of Adam, when they offered an offering, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other.[a] He said: I will certainly kill *y*ou. (The other) said: Allah accepts only from the dutiful. **28**If *y*ou stretch out *y*our hand against me to kill me I shall not stretch out my hand against *y*ou to kill *y*ou. Surely I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds: **29**I would rather that *y*ou should bear the sin against me and *y*our own sin,[b] thus *y*ou would be one of the companions of the Fire; and that is the recompense of the unjust. **30**At length his mind made it easy for him to kill his brother, so he killed him; then he became one of the losers. **31**Then Allah sent a crow scratching the ground to show him how to cover the dead body of his brother. He said: Woe is me! Am I not able to be as this crow and cover the dead body of my brother? So he became regretful.

32 For this reason We prescribed for the Children of Israel that whoever kills a person, unless it is for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he had killed all mankind.[c] And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved the lives of all mankind. And certainly Our messengers came to them with clear arguments, but even after that many of them commit excesses in the land. **33**The only punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to make mischief in the land [d] is that they

***a* (27)** The reference is apparently to the story of Cain and Abel. Compare Genesis 4:3–12. But the story may be taken allegorically, where the Israelites may be taken for the aggressive and sinful brother and the Ishmaelites, as represented by the Holy Prophet, for the righteous one.

***b* (29)** The words "the sin against me" are literally "my sin" but here mean *the sin committed against me,* i.e., the sin of murder. By "your sin" is meant *his previous sin* on account of which his offering was not accepted. The righteous brother tells the wicked one that even after knowing that he intended to kill him he would not be the first to raise his hand against him and kill him, but he would rather that the guilty one should go on adding to his sins.

***c* (32)** The reference is generally understood to be to the gravity of the crime of murder.

***d* (33-1)** This has generally been accepted as referring to armed robbers and murderers who cause disorder and loss of life and property in a settled state of society, and not to those who actually wage war. The punishment to be inflicted

should be murdered, or crucified, or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides, or they should be imprisoned.[a] This shall be a disgrace for them in this world, and in the Hereafter they shall have a grievous punishment, **34**except those who repent before you overpower them; so know that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Section 6: **Punishment of offenders**

35 O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah, and seek means of nearness to Him, and strive hard in His way that you may be successful. **36**Those who disbelieve, even if they had all that is in the earth, and as much as it again, to ransom themselves with it from the punishment of the day of Resurrection, it would not be accepted from them; and theirs is a painful punishment. **37**They would desire to come forth from the Fire, and they will not come forth from it, and theirs is a lasting punishment.

38 And (as for) the man and the woman addicted to theft, cut off their hands as a penalty for what they have earned — an exemplary punishment from Allah. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.[b] **39**But whoever repents after his wrongdoing and reforms, Allah

in any particular case would depend upon the circumstances of the case, as well as the time and place where the crime was committed. (*Editor's Note:* Some recent commentators suggest that these words do not convey commands to apply these punishments as legal penalties, but describe the natural consequences that occur in society as a result of the actions of the perpetrators of such crimes.)

a **(33-2)** These words literally mean *they should be banished from the earth*, but are mostly accepted as meaning *imprisonment.* Deportation is also included if we take "earth" as meaning a particular country.

b **(38)** The *cutting off of hands* may be taken metaphorically or literally. If taken metaphorically, it would simply mean *restraining* the thief by imprisonment or otherwise. If taken literally, it must be emphasized that it is the maximum punishment, and whether it is inflicted would depend on the circumstances of the case. This punishment is called exemplary, and exemplary punishment could only be inflicted where the crime is very serious or the offender is a habitual criminal. The next verse shows that the punishment of cutting off the hand is only for a criminal *who does not reform*, i.e., *for the habitual offender*. Moreover, what is required is *repentance and reform*. To give a man a chance to reform it is necessary that he should be given freedom of action before the more serious punishment is inflicted. I translate the word *al-sāriq* as meaning *one addicted to theft*, not only for the reasons given above but also because an explanatory reading of this word is *al-sarriq*, which is a noun of intensiveness, from the same root.

will turn to him (mercifully). Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **40**Do *y*ou not know that Allah is He to Whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? He punishes whom He pleases, and forgives whom He pleases. And Allah is Powerful over all things.

41 O Messenger, do not let those grieve *y*ou who hasten to disbelief, from among those who say with their mouths, We believe, and their hearts do not believe, and from among those who are Jews — they are listeners for the sake of a lie, listeners for another people who have not come to *y*ou.[a] They alter words after they are put in their (proper) places, saying: If you are given this, take it, and if you are not given this, be cautious. And he for whom Allah intends temptation, *y*ou control nothing for him against Allah. Those are they whose hearts Allah does not intend to purify. For them is disgrace in this world, and for them a grievous punishment in the Hereafter. **42**Listeners for the sake of a lie, devourers of forbidden things, so if they come to *y*ou, judge between them or turn away from them. And if *y*ou turn away from them, they cannot harm *y*ou at all. And if *y*ou judge, judge between them with equity. Surely Allah loves the equitable.[b] **43**And how do they make *y*ou a judge and they have the Torah in which is Allah's judgment? Yet they turn away after that! And these are not believers.

Section 7: **The Quran and previous scriptures**

44 Surely We revealed the Torah, having guidance and light.[c] By it did the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) judge for the Jews, and the rabbis and the doctors of law, because they

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a **(41)** The meaning is that they listen, but their object is only to invent lies and to give false reports to people who have not come to the Holy Prophet.

b **(42)** By the agreement drawn up between the various nationalities of Madinah on the advent of the Holy Prophet there (see 2:84 footnote), all disputes were to be referred to the Holy Prophet, but the Jews had by this time become so inimical to the Prophet that he is allowed to refuse to judge between them. In case he judged between them, he is still told to judge with equity. To be equitable, despite their severe enmity, shows that the Prophet had reached the highest point of moral rectitude to which man can attain.

c **(44-1)** Verses 44–47 do not provide evidence of the purity of the text of the Bible as we have it. That the Torah was a Divine revelation containing light and guidance has never been denied. What is denied is that that light and guidance were kept intact throughout the ages. It is further denied that these two books were meant for the whole world and for all ages.

were required to guard the Book of Allah,[a] and they were witnesses of it. So do not fear the people and fear Me, and do not take a small price for My messages. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, those are the disbelievers.[b] **45** And We prescribed to them in it that life is for life, and eye for eye, and nose for nose, and ear for ear, and tooth for tooth, and for wounds retaliation. But whoever forgoes it, it shall be an expiation for him.[c] And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, those are the wrongdoers.

46 And We sent after them in their footsteps Jesus, son of Mary, verifying what was (already) before him of the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel containing guidance and light, and verifying what was before it of the Torah, and a guidance and an admonition for the dutiful.[d] **47** And let the People of the Gospel judge by what Allah has revealed in it. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, those are the transgressors.

48 And We have revealed to *y*ou the Book with the truth, verifying what is (already) before it of the Book and a guardian over it,[e] so judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not

***a* (44-2)** They were required to guard the Book of God but nonetheless alterations were made in it as stated in 2:75 and 2:79.

***b* (44-3)** By judging is not meant only the judging of civil or criminal cases, but judging in all matters of religion, so that those who did not judge the revelation of the Holy Prophet by what was revealed in the Torah were disbelievers. The adoption of the words *what Allah has revealed* instead of the *Torah* is significant. It shows that the whole of the Torah as existing then was not looked upon by the Quran as being the Divine revelation.

***c* (45)** If a man forgoes his right to an act of reprisal against his brother, this shall be an expiation for any wrong he may have done.

***d* (46)** The description of the Gospel as containing light and guidance conveys the same significance as the similar statement regarding the Torah in v. 44. In addition it is stated that the Gospel verified the Torah despite the fact that it introduces many new doctrines in place of those given in the Mosaic law. This clearly shows that by verification is meant only corroboration of the general principles and broad doctrines of the faith, such as the unity of God and equitable dealing with people, or the declaration by one prophet of the truth of a previous prophet, as the declaration of the truth of Moses by Jesus and of both by the Holy Prophet. It is in this sense that the Quran is spoken of as verifying the Torah and the Gospel.

***e* (48-1)** Being *a guardian* over all previous revelation shows that whatever was of permanent value in the previous scriptures has been preserved in the

follow their low desires, (turning away) from the truth that has come to *y*ou. For everyone of you We appointed a law and a way.[a] And if Allah had pleased He would have made you a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you.[b] So vie with one another in good works. To Allah you will all return, so He will inform you of that in which you differed; **49**and that *y*ou should judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires, and be cautious of them that they do not seduce *y*ou from part of what Allah has revealed to *y*ou. Then if they turn away, know that Allah desires to afflict them for some of their sins. And surely many of the people are transgressors. **50**Is it then the judgment of ignorance that they desire? And who is better than Allah to judge for a people who are sure?

Section 8: **Relations of Muslims with enemies**

51 O you who believe, do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends. They are friends of each other. And whoever among you takes them for friends, he is indeed one of them. Surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.[c] **52**But *y*ou see those in whose

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Quran. The previous books contained a light and guidance for the people for whom they were meant, and they were commanded to judge by those books, but the Quran is now the Book which judges all truth, wherever it may have been.

a **(48-2)** The appointment of a law and a way for everyone refers to the giving of different laws to different nations in accordance with their requirements before the revelation of the Quran, which fulfilled the requirements of all nations and all ages. Thus the Quran here recognizes the principle to which it refers frequently, that prophets were raised among every people, for which see particularly 10:47, 13:7 and 35:24.

b **(48-3)** One significance is that man is placed above the whole of creation in that he has been granted discretionary powers. Hence, people follow different ways, adopting different sects. If man had not been granted these powers, all humans would have been a single people, but then man's better qualities would not have been manifested. The words may, however, also mean "if Allah pleases He will make you a single people", referring to the ultimate destiny of the human race. In fact all people are now growing to the consciousness that they are all but one nation. (*Editor's Note:* These words, along with what follows in this verse, also indicate that all religions, though they are different, set before their adherents the same goal of *doing good works,* and therefore the followers of each religion should try to excel followers of other religions, or *vie with them,* in the doing of good works. That is how God *tries* adherents of every religion in this life.)

c **(51)** All non-believers, whatever their own differences, had made common

hearts is a disease, hastening towards them, saying: We fear that a calamity may befall us.[a] Maybe Allah will bring the victory or a commandment from Himself,[b] so they will regret what they hid in their souls. **53**And those who believe will say: Are these they who swore by Allah with their most forcible oaths that they were surely with you? Their deeds will be fruitless, so they will be losers.

54 O you who believe, if anyone of you should turn back from his religion, then Allah will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble towards the believers, mighty against the disbelievers, striving hard in Allah's way and not fearing the censure of any censurer.[c] This is Allah's grace — He gives it to whom He pleases. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing. **55**Only Allah is your Friend and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayer and give the due charity, and they bow down. **56**And whoever takes Allah and His Messenger and those who believe for friend — surely the party of Allah, they shall triumph.

Section 9: **Those who mock**

57 O you who believe, do not take for friends those who take your religion as a mockery and a sport, from among those who were given the Book before you and the disbelievers; and keep your duty

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cause against Islam; this is what is meant by their being *friends of each other*. Muslims are warned that they should not expect help or friendship from any party of them, whether Jews, Christians, or idolaters. It would have been weakness of faith in the ultimate triumph of Islam if, from fear of a powerful enemy, they had sought help and friendship here and there among a hostile people, as the next verse shows. See 60:7–9 which make it clear that the prohibition against friendly relations with the disbelievers was only temporary, to be operative only so long as the war continued. Those verses settle conclusively that friendly relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, as such, are not prohibited.

***a* (52-1)** By *hastening towards them* is meant hastening to make friendship with them or seeking their help, fearing a Muslim reverse.

***b* (52-2)** Bringing about *a commandment* refers to the establishment of the rule of Islam, by which is meant the dominance of Islam, there being a further reference to the spiritual conquests of Islam in v. 54.

***c* (54)** Muslims were severely persecuted while at Makkah and their troubles at Madinah increased manifold owing to the presence of warring tribes on all sides. Yet they faced all these hardships with the greatest perseverance, and cases of apostasy were rare.

to Allah if you are believers.[a] **58**And when you call to prayer they take it as a mockery and a sport. That is because they are a people who do not understand.

59 Say: O People of the Book, do you find fault with us for only that we believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed before, while most of you are transgressors? **60**Say: Shall I inform you of those worse than this in retribution from Allah? They are those whom Allah has cursed and upon whom He brought His wrath and of whom He made apes and swine, and who serve the devil. These are in a worse plight and further astray from the straight path. **61**And when they come to you, they say, We believe, and surely they come in unbelief and they go forth in it. And Allah knows best what they conceal. **62**And *y*ou see many of them hastening to (commit) sin and transgression, and their devouring unlawful gain. Certainly evil is what they do. **63**Why do not the rabbis and the doctors of law prohibit them from their sinful utterances and their devouring unlawful gain? Certainly evil are the works they do.[b]

64 And the Jews say: The hand of Allah is tied up. Their own hands are fettered and they are cursed for what they say. No, both His hands are spread out.[c] He disburses as He pleases. And what has been revealed to *y*ou from *y*our Lord will certainly make many of them increase in inordinacy and disbelief. And We have cast

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a **(57)** Muslims were prohibited from having friendly relations with those who mocked their religion and their Prophet. Friendship with such people would indeed have led to a similar bent of mind. (*Editor's Note:* This again makes clear that friendship is only disallowed with disbelievers when they behave in a hostile way towards Islam. Muslims are nowhere required to attack physically or punish those who mock their religion, but only withdraw friendship temporarily.)

b **(63)** *Editor's Note:* It is for their committing of evil deeds, the sins prohibited in their own scriptures, that the Jews are here condemned. Verses 65 and 66 make it clear that Jews and Christians should not have violated the good teachings of their own scriptures and that there were some of them who did not.

c **(64-1)** Muslims as a community were mostly poor people who accepted the truth. Jews on the other hand carried on business and were rich; hence they taunted Muslims, saying that Allah's hand was fettered. See also 3:181. The words "both His hands are spread out" indicate that God will enrich Muslims materially as well as spiritually.

among them enmity and hatred till the day of Resurrection.[a] Whenever they kindle a fire for war, Allah puts it out, and they strive to make mischief in the land. And Allah does not love the mischief-makers. **65**And if the People of the Book had believed and kept their duty, We would certainly have removed from them their evils, and made them enter gardens of bliss. **66**And if they had observed the Torah and the Gospel and what is revealed to them from their Lord, they would certainly have eaten from above them and from beneath their feet. Some of them keep to the moderate course; but most of them — evil is what they do.[b]

Section 10: **Christian deviation from the Truth**

67 O Messenger, deliver what has been revealed to *y*ou from *y*our Lord; and if *y*ou do not, *y*ou have not delivered His message. And Allah will protect *y*ou from people. Surely Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.[c]

68 Say: O People of the Book, you follow no good till you observe the Torah and the Gospel and what is revealed to you from your Lord. And surely what has been revealed to *y*ou from *y*our Lord will make many of them increase in inordinacy and disbelief; so do not grieve for the disbelieving people. **69**Surely those who

***a* (64-2)** The casting of enmity among them may relate to the enmity between the Jews and the Christians, because both are again and again referred to in this chapter. (*Editor's Note:* That enmity has existed throughout their history, culminating in the atrocities against the Jews in Europe in the 20th century.)

***b* (66)** If they had observed the Torah and the Gospel which contained clear prophecies of the Prophet's advent, they would have believed in the revelation of the Quran as well. The eating from above is in reference to spiritual blessings and eating from beneath their feet signifies the earthly provisions; i.e., they would have had abundance of both. The attitude of liberality adopted by Islam towards even its most implacable foes is remarkable. Despite their strong enmity to Islam, some Jews and Christians are described as *keeping to the moderate course*. (*Editor's Note:* It may also be meant that if Jews and Christians had acted on the moral teachings of their respective scriptures they would at least have not opposed the Prophet Muhammad, still less tried to destroy Islam.)

***c* (67)** The promise is given here that the Holy Prophet will remain under Divine protection as against the innumerable dangers that threatened him from all quarters and the numerous plots against his life. But it also refers to the Prophet's spiritual protection. God protects prophets by creating them pure from every sin in their very nature, keeping them firm in trials, sending down tranquillity upon them and protecting their hearts against evil.

believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the Christians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.

70 Certainly We made a covenant with the Children of Israel and We sent to them messengers. Whenever a messenger came to them with what their souls did not desire, some (of them) they called liars and some they (even) sought to kill. **71**And they thought that there would be no affliction,[a] so they became blind and deaf; then Allah turned to them (mercifully) but many of them (again) became blind and deaf.[b] And Allah is Seer of what they do.

72 Certainly they disbelieve who say: Allah, He is the Messiah, son of Mary. And the Messiah said: O Children of Israel, serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord.[c] Surely whoever sets up partners with Allah, Allah has forbidden to him the Garden and his abode is the Fire. And for the wrongdoers there will be no helpers. **73**Certainly they disbelieve who say: Allah is the third of the three.[d] And there is no God but One God. And if they do not refrain from what they say, a painful punishment will surely befall such of them as disbelieve.[e] **74**Will they not then turn to Allah and ask His forgiveness? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

***a* (71-1)** Although they had been repeatedly warned of the afflictions which would befall them, they still thought that, being a favoured nation, they would not suffer punishment for their evil deeds. They had been subjected to great sufferings at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian rulers who followed him, large numbers having been slain and the rest taken prisoners. And again they suffered at the hands of Titus. See v. 78 where this affliction is spoken of as coming after David and Jesus.

***b* (71-2)** Allah's turning mercifully to them signifies the advent of Jesus, and their becoming blind and deaf a second time refers to their rejection of him.

***c* (72)** "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Matthew, 4:10).

***d* (73-1)** The well-known Christian doctrine of the Trinity is here plainly referred to. It should be noted that the name of Mary is never mentioned in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity. But as the Christians, especially the Roman Catholics, invested Mary with Divine character, as being the mother of God, the Quran often mentions her along with Jesus as being an ordinary mortal.

***e* (73-2)** The doctrine of the Atonement has slowly and gradually made the Christian world forget God altogether, and material advancement and the acquisition of worldly power has become their only concern. They first sought to subjugate the whole world, and, having done that, they are now seeking to

75 The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger — messengers had indeed passed away before him. And his mother was a truthful woman. They both used to eat food.[a] See how We make the messages clear to them, then see how they are turned away (from truth)! **76**Say: Do you serve besides Allah that which controls for you neither harm nor benefit? And Allah — He is the Hearing, the Knowing. **77**Say: O People of the Book, do not exaggerate in the matter of your religion unjustly, nor follow the low desires of people who went astray before and led many astray, and went astray from the right path.[b]

Section 11: **Christian nearness to Islam**

78 Those who disbelieved from among the Children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary. This was because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits.[c] **79**They did not forbid one another the hateful things they did. Evil indeed was what they did. **80**You see many of them befriending those who disbelieve. Certainly evil is what their souls send ahead for them, so that Allah is displeased with them, and in punishment will

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overpower each other. Their mutual hatred and enmity as a punishment for their violation of the covenant of God has been already clearly spoken of in v. 14, and again in v. 64, as also in an earlier revelation: "And on that day We shall let some of them surge against others" (18:99).

a **(75)** Feeling hungry and partaking of food shows that both Jesus and his mother were ordinary mortals. Every living thing needs food; it is only the Supreme Being Who has no need of it. As Jesus is clearly spoken of as eating food while alive, he could not remain alive without food, and this verse thus negatives the allegation that Jesus is still alive.

b **(77)** The *exaggeration* spoken of here refers to the Christian doctrine raising a mortal to the dignity of Godhead. The Christians are here told that in making this doctrine the basis of their religion they have only followed an erroneous doctrine preached by people before them. Recent criticism has shown that the Christians have only followed previous idolatrous nations in ascribing a son to God. This subject has been fully discussed in *The Sources of Christianity* by the late Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din.

c **(78)** After Moses, David and Jesus, who represent the highest achievement of Israelite prophethood in temporal and spiritual glory, spoke of the advent of the Holy Prophet in unmistakable terms. The *curse* is used here in its original sense of being removed further off from Divine mercy. Both prophets had warned the Jews that their transgressions called for Divine punishment which should soon overtake them if they did not mend their ways. The time of both was followed by a great affliction overtaking the Jews, in the respective depredations of the Babylonian kings and the destruction wrought by Titus.

they abide. **81**And if they believed in Allah and the Prophet[a] and what is revealed to him, they would not take them for friends, but most of them are transgressors. **82***Y*ou will certainly find the most violent of people in enmity against the believers to be the Jews and the idolaters; and *y*ou will find the nearest in friendship to the believers to be those who say, We are Christians. That is because there are priests and monks among them and because they are not proud.[b]

Part 7

83 And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger *y*ou see their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth they recognize. They say: Our Lord, we believe, so write us down with the witnesses.[c] **84**And what (reason) have we that we should not believe in Allah and in the Truth that has come to us, while we earnestly desire that our Lord should make us enter with the righteous people? **85**So Allah rewarded them for what they said, with Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them. And that is the

a **(81)** By *al-Nabī* or *the Prophet* in the Quran is always meant the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and he is often spoken of and addressed as *al-Nabī* or *al-Rasūl, the Prophet* or *the Messenger*. In fact, he is referred to as *the Prophet* or *that Prophet* in earlier prophecy as well (John, 1:21,25). The Jews professed belief in the Unity of God, yet they made a common cause with the idolatrous Quraish to uproot Islam which was a religion of pure monotheism.

b **(82)** The Christians were nearer to Islam than the Jews, not only because the Muslims accepted Jesus as a prophet of God, but because there were still among them many people who feared and worshipped God. In the Holy Prophet's own time, the Negus, Christian Emperor of Abyssinia, accepted Islam; Heraclius, the Byzantine ruler, was favourably disposed towards it; and even the Christian deputation of Najran towards the end of the Prophet's life was impressed with the Prophet's arguments. But the words here are more of a prophetical nature. In the early history of Islam, Christians in Egypt, North Africa, Syria, Persia and other countries, accepted Islam in very large numbers and at present, too, when Islam is being presented to the West, the Christians are receiving the message with an open heart.

c **(83)** This refers to the Christians who believed. An important such personage was the Negus of Abyssinia, in whose dominions the Muslims found shelter in the early days of the Prophet's mission, when compelled to flee from Makkah on account of the severe persecutions of the Quraish. When the portion of the chapter of the Quran entitled 'Mary' dealing with Jesus Christ was read out to him, the words so impressed him that he wept and said that Jesus was not one whit more than the Quran described him to be. That he subsequently became a true convert to Islam is clearly shown by a funeral service having been held for him by the Holy Prophet when news of his death reached Madinah.

reward of the doers of good. **86**And those who disbelieve and reject Our messages, such are the companions of the flaming fire.

Section 12: **Warning of sins of previous people**

87 O you who believe, do not forbid the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, nor exceed the limits. Surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits.[a] **88**And eat of the lawful and good (things) that Allah has given you, and keep your duty to Allah, in Whom you believe. **89**Allah will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for the making of deliberate oaths; so its expiation [b] is the feeding of ten poor persons with the average (food) you feed your families with, or their clothing, or the freeing of a slave. But whoever does not find (means) should fast for three days. This is the expiation of your oaths when you swear. And keep your oaths. Thus does Allah make clear to you His messages that you may give thanks.

90 O you who believe, intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows [c] are only an uncleanness, the devil's work; so shun it that you may succeed.[d] **91**The devil desires only to create enmity and hatred among you by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you back from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer.

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a **(87)** Muslims are told on the one hand not to follow the self-imposed restrictions of Christian monks and priests, and at the same time they are warned against depriving themselves of Divine blessings by falling into evil habits.

b **(89)** The oaths referred to are in relation to vows, etc., by which one forbids oneself what is otherwise lawful. The injunction at the end of this verse, *keep your oaths*, also shows that oaths cannot be violated generally, and therefore expiation is only allowed in the case of oaths by which a person deprives himself of some lawful thing or of an occasion of virtue, as in 2:226.

c **(90-1)** For "stones set up" and "dividing by arrows" see 5:3 footnotes 2 and 3.

d **(90-2)** This verse totally prohibits all intoxicants and games of chance; and besides, by classing them with sacrifices to stones set up for idols and dividing by arrows, subjects them to the prohibition of 5:3. It is related that when this verse was revealed a crier proclaimed in the streets of Madinah that wine was prohibited, and in response to this every jar of wine in a Muslim house was emptied, so that wine flowed in the streets (Bukhari, 46:21, hadith 2464). Never in the history of the world was such a deep-rooted evil as drink so suddenly yet so completely eradicated.

Will you then keep back?[a] **92**And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and be cautious. But if you turn back then know that the duty of Our Messenger is only to deliver the message clearly. **93**On those who believe and do good there is no blame for what they eat,[b] when they keep their duty and believe and do good deeds, then keep their duty and believe, then keep their duty and do good (to others). And Allah loves the doers of good.

Section 13: **Inviolability of the Ka'bah**

94 O you who believe, Allah will certainly try you in respect of some game which your hands and your lances can reach, that Allah may know who fears Him in secret. Whoever exceeds the limit after this, for him is a painful punishment. **95**O you who believe, do not kill game while you are on pilgrimage.[c] And whoever among you kills it intentionally, the compensation of it is the like of what he killed, from the cattle, as two just persons among you judge, as an offering to be brought to the Ka'bah, or the expiation of it is the feeding of the poor or equivalent of it in fasting, that he may taste the unwholesome result of his deed. Allah pardons what happened in the past. And whoever returns (to it), Allah will punish him. And Allah is Mighty, Lord of retribution. **96**Lawful to you is the game of the sea and its food,[d] a provision for you and for the travellers, and the game of the land is forbidden to you so long as you are on pilgrimage, and keep your duty to Allah, to Whom you shall be gathered.

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a **(91)** Only one very clear reason is here given why intoxicants and games of chance are forbidden. Elsewhere it is clearly stated that in intoxicants and games of chance there is a great sin (2:219).

b **(93)** The verse speaks of those who died before the prohibition came. But even if it is taken generally, it would not justify doing what is unlawful, because one who believes, does good deeds, and keeps his duty will not approach any prohibited thing. In three times mentioning belief and regard for duty, the reference is to the threefold duty of man, viz., to Allah, to himself, and to others.

c **(95)** The prohibition to kill game when on pilgrimage, mentioned in verses 94–96, is a token of respect for the security of the Ka'bah (see v. 97), in addition to being a measure necessary for the safety of life in such a large gathering.

d **(96)** By the game of the sea is meant all water game, whether sea, river, pond, or lake. The food of the sea is here distinguished from its game, and means what is found having been left by the sea or river on dry land, without needing to be caught.

97 Allah has made the Ka‘bah, the Sacred House,[a] a means of support for the people,[b] and the sacred month and the offerings and the victims with garlands. That is that you may know that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and that Allah is Knower of all things. **98**Know that Allah is Severe in retribution and that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **99**The duty of the Messenger is only to deliver the message. And Allah knows what you do openly and what you hide. **100**Say: The bad and the good are not equal, though the abundance of the bad may make you wonder. So keep your duty to Allah, you people of understanding, that you may succeed.

Section 14: **Some directions for Muslims**

101 O you who believe, do not ask about things which, if made known to you, would give you trouble; and if you ask about them when the Quran is being revealed, they will be made known to you. Allah pardons this; and Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing.[c] **102**A people before you indeed asked such questions, then became disbelievers in them.

103 Allah has not ordained a *baḥīrah* or a *sā’ibah* or a *waṣīlah* or a *ḥāmī,* but those who disbelieve fabricate a lie against Allah.[d]

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a **(97-1)** The word *Ka‘bah* comes from the root meaning *it swelled* or *became prominent*, and it is so called because of *its prominence*, or it is a prophetical name showing that it shall forever have eminence in the world. *Al-Bait al-Ḥarām* (*The Sacred* or *Inviolable House*), used here, is also one of its names, and among the Arabs it was known as *Bait Allāh*, or *the House of Allah*.

b **(97-2)** This is a prophetic announcement that the Ka‘bah will forever remain a support or stay for mankind, where pilgrims will flock from all parts of the world. The words “That is that you may know that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth” indicate that the fulfilment of this prophecy in all future ages will be a sign of the great knowledge of Allah, Who pronounced it at a time when the Ka‘bah was hardly known beyond the borders of Arabia; see 3:97.

c **(101)** Islam prohibited questions relating to details on many points which would require this or that practice to be made obligatory, and much was left to individual will or the circumstances of the time and place. The exercise of judgment occupies a very important place in Islam and this gives ample scope to different nations and communities to frame laws for themselves to meet new and changed situations. The Holy Prophet also discouraged questions on details in which a Muslim could choose a way for himself.

d **(103)** The liberation of certain animals in honour of idols was a practice

And most of them do not understand. **104**And when it is said to them, Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger, they say: Sufficient for us is that on which we found our fathers. What! Even though their fathers knew nothing and had no guidance! **105**O you who believe, take care of your souls — he who goes astray cannot harm you when you are on the right way. To Allah you will all return, so He will inform you of what you did.

106 O you who believe, call to witness between you, when death draws near to one of you, at the time of making the will, two just persons from among you, or two others from among others than you,[a] if you are travelling in the land and the calamity of death befalls you. You should detain them after the prayer. Then if you doubt (them), they shall both swear by Allah (saying): We will not take for it a price even for a relative, nor will we hide the testimony of Allah,[b] for then certainly we shall be sinners. **107**If it is discovered that they are guilty of a sin, two others shall stand up in their place from among those against whom the first two have been guilty of a sin; so they shall swear by Allah: Certainly our testimony is truer than the testimony of those two, and we have not exceeded the limit, for then surely we should be unjust. **108**Thus it is more probable that they will give true testimony or fear that other oaths will be taken after their oaths. And keep your duty to Allah and listen. And Allah does not guide the transgressing people.

Section 15: **Christian love of the material life**

109 On the day when Allah will gather together the messengers and say: What was the response you received? They will say: We have no knowledge. Surely You are the great Knower of the unseen.[c] **110**When Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary, remember My

among the Arabs, and as Islam uprooted every vestige of idolatry, this practice is condemned here. The terms *baḥīrah, sā'ibah, waṣīlah* and *ḥāmī* referred to various types of camels and goat.

a **(106-1)** The words "others than you" show that the evidence of the followers of other religions is admissible according to the Quran, who may be chosen as witnesses by Muslims.

b **(106-2)** "The testimony of Allah" stands for the testimony which Allah has enjoined to be borne uprightly.

c **(109)** Only Allah knew how their message was received, because they could not say how far its rejecters were guilty, nor how far the accepters of the message remained true to it after their death.

favour to *y*ou and to *y*our mother, when I strengthened *y*ou with the Holy Spirit; *y*ou spoke to people in the cradle and in old age, and when I taught *y*ou the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel, and when *y*ou determined out of dust (a thing) like the form of a bird by My permission, then *y*ou breathed into it and it became a bird by My permission; and *y*ou healed the blind and the leprous by My permission; and when *y*ou raised the dead by My permission; and when I withheld the Children of Israel from *y*ou when *y*ou came to them with clear arguments — but those of them who disbelieved said: This is nothing but clear enchantment.[a]

111 And when I revealed to the disciples, saying, Believe in Me and My messenger, they said: We believe, and (ask You to) bear witness that we are submitting ones. **112**When the disciples said: Jesus, son of Mary, is *y*our Lord able to send down food [b] to us from heaven? He said: Keep your duty to Allah if you are believers. **113**They said: We desire to eat of it, and that our hearts should be satisfied, and that we may know that *y*ou have indeed spoken truth to us, and that we may be witnesses of it. **114**Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Allah, our Lord, send down to us food from heaven which should be to us an ever-recurring happiness [c] to the first of us and the last of us, and a sign from You, and give us sustenance and You are the Best of the sustainers.[d] **115**Allah said: Surely I will send it down to you, but whoever disbelieves afterwards from

***a* (110)** For being strengthened with the Holy Spirit, see 2:87 footnote; for speaking in the cradle and in old age, see 3:46 footnote; for the miracles spoken of here, see 3:49 footnotes; for the withholding of the Israelites, see 3:54–55 footnotes.

***b* (112)** The word *mā'idah,* also the title of this chapter, means both *a table with food on it* and *food*. It also means *knowledge*, because knowledge is the nourishment for hearts, as food is the nourishment for bodies.

***c* (114-1)** The word *'īd* used here means *a festival,* the literal significance being *an ever-recurring happiness* or *source of enjoyment*.

***d* (114-2)** This passage seems to refer to the well-known prayer for *daily bread*, which Jesus appears to have included in the famous Lord's Prayer on account of the earthly inclinations of his disciples. The food of the earth has no doubt been granted in abundance to Christians, but this has deprived them of the heavenly food. The Muslim's prayer in the opening chapter of the Quran craves not for bread but for the right path. The form of the prayer here, that it should be *an ever-recurring happiness*, shows clearly that the prayer was not for a table laden with provisions, as is generally supposed. As to its being sent down from heaven, it should be borne in mind that, in the language of the Quran, everything is with God and is sent down to people; see 15:21.

among you, I will punish him with a punishment with which I will not punish anyone among the nations.[a]

Section 16: **False doctrines introduced after Jesus' death**

116 And when Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary, did *y*ou say to people, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah?[b] He will say: Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right to (say). If I had said it, You would indeed have known it. You know what is in my mind, and I do not know what is in Your mind. Surely You are the great Knower of the unseen. **117**I said to them nothing but what You commanded me: Serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord; and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when You caused me to die You were the Watcher over them. And You are Witness of all things.[c] **118**If You punish them, surely they are Your servants; and if You protect them, surely You

***a* (115)** The terrible calamities which the two World Wars brought to humanity, and especially to the Christian nations, are unprecedented in human history. The calamities which have befallen the world today are due to the mad race for bread and for the wealth of this world. The neglect of the higher values of life and running blindly after material comforts has already brought to the world a ruin which it has never witnessed before.

***b* (116)** From this description of Mary being taken for a god by Christians, some critics of the Quran conclude that it has mistakenly considered the Trinity to consist of the three persons — God, Jesus and Mary. However, the doctrine of the Trinity is not mentioned here, while the divinity of Mary is not mentioned where the Quran speaks of the Trinity. See 4:171 footnote 3 and 5:73 footnote 1. As to Mary being taken for a god, the catechism of the Roman Church includes the following doctrines: "That she is truly the mother of God, and the second Eve, by whose means we have received blessing and life; that she is the mother of Pity and very specially our advocate; that her images are of the utmost utility" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 11th ed., vol. 17, p. 813).

***c* (117)** This verse is a conclusive proof that Jesus died a natural death, and is not now alive in heaven. Here Jesus says that so long as he was among his followers he was a witness of their condition, and he did not find them holding the belief in his divinity. The logical conclusion of this statement is that the false doctrine of his divinity was introduced into the Christian faith *after his death*, after *"You caused me to die"*; see further 3:55 footnote 1. A saying of the Holy Prophet is recorded in which the Holy Prophet speaks concerning himself in the very words which are here put into the mouth of Jesus. He said that he would be shown on the day of Resurrection some of his followers who had gone against his teachings, and "I would say what the righteous servant said: I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when You caused me to die, You were the Watcher over them" (Bukhari, 60:8, hadith 3349).

are the Mighty, the Wise.[a] [119]Allah will say: This is a day when their truth will profit the truthful ones. For them are Gardens in which rivers flow, abiding therein forever. Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Allah. That is the mighty achievement. [120]Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in them; and He is Powerful over all things.

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a **(118)** The words *taghfir la-hum* (*protect them* or *forgive them*) refer to their final protection which will be granted to the Christian nations through acceptance of Islam. If the forgiveness of sins was meant, the Divine attributes referred to would have been those speaking of forgiveness and mercy, as the Forgiving, the Merciful. Instead of that the attributes referred to are the Mighty, the Wise, which generally indicate that some great purpose would be achieved and a transformation would be brought about.

Chapter 6

Al-An‘ām Cattle

The name of this chapter refers to certain superstitious and idolatrous practices of the pre-Islamic Arabs (v. 142–144) which were to be abolished to establish the doctrine of Divine Unity. The chapter deals with this doctrine at length, presents evidence to prove its truth and declares its ultimate triumph over idolatry and all other kinds of polytheism. This chapter was revealed at Makkah in the last year of the phase of the Holy Prophet’s life there.

Section 1: **Ultimate triumph of Divine Unity**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Praise be to Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, and made darkness and light. Yet those who disbelieve set up equals to their Lord.[a] **2**He it is Who created you from dust, then He decreed a term. And there is a term named with Him; still you doubt.[b] **3**And He is Allah in the heavens and in the earth. He knows your secret (thoughts) and your open (words), and He knows what you earn.[c]

4 And no message comes to them of the messages of their Lord but they turn away from it. **5**So they rejected the truth when it came to them, but soon will come to them the news of what they mocked.

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a **(1)** The words that Allah is the Maker of darkness and light are directed against the dualistic doctrine of the Magian religion, which holds light and darkness to be two co-eternal principles. The religion of Islam is the purest monotheism, and thus it holds that the ultimate cause of all things is the Great Maker of the heavens and the earth. Pure monotheism holds out before mankind the bright hope that, as goodness is inherent in the Divine Being, it is also the goal to which the creation moves on; while dualism considers the prevalence of evil to be necessary.

b **(2)** The first term is that of life and the second the Resurrection. All humans are here said to be created from clay, which means, in the case of Adam as well as human beings generally, that the earth is the original source, and dust the first stage, of life.

c **(3)** Life in Resurrection, spoken of in the previous verse, is here stated to be the result of man’s own actions, which, whether done secretly or openly, are known to God. It is out of *what you earn* that He shapes a new life for you.

6Do they not see how many a generation We destroyed before them, whom We had established in the earth as We have not established you, and We sent clouds pouring abundant rain on them, and We made rivers flow beneath them? Then We destroyed them for their sins, and raised up after them another generation.

7 And if We had sent down to *y*ou a writing on paper, then they had touched it with their hands, those who disbelieve would have said: This is nothing but clear enchantment.[a] **8**And they say: Why has not an angel been sent down to him? And if We send down an angel, the matter would be decided and then they would not be given respite.[b] **9**And if We had made him an angel, We would certainly have made him a man, and (thus) made confused to them what they confuse.[c] **10**And messengers before *y*ou were indeed mocked, but that which they derided befell those of them who scoffed.[d]

Section 2: **Greatness of Divine mercy**

11 Say: Travel in the land, then see what was the end of the rejectors. **12**Say: To whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To Allah. He has ordained mercy on Himself.[e]

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a **(7)** If truth had been sent down to man in the physical form of a book, and had not been revealed to the mind of man, it could not bring about a transformation in the minds of human beings. But even if it had taken a physical shape, they would have called it an enchantment, and still rejected it.

b **(8)** They wanted to see the spiritual reality of the angel in a physical form. The presence of angels was felt by the righteous in the transformation which they worked in their hearts but the hearts of the wicked were impervious to all good, and hence the only form in which the angels could make their presence felt to them was by punishing them for their evil deeds. Hence the coming of the angels to the guilty is always spoken of in the Quran as being synonymous with the infliction of the punishment with which they were threatened. Compare 2:210 and v. 158 of this chapter.

c **(9)** If an angel were made a messenger to mankind, he would doubtless appear in the form of a man as the physical eye cannot see angels. Thus there would still be the same confusion in their minds as when a human being was entrusted with the Divine message. Moreover only a human being could serve as a model for people.

d **(10)** They ridiculed the idea of the Prophet and the believers being triumphant. Truth had always triumphed, they are told, and it would triumph even now.

e **(12)** The words *He has ordained mercy on Himself* imply that mercy is in fact His very nature. The evidence of Divine mercy is manifest in the physical

He will certainly gather you on the day of Resurrection — there is no doubt about it. Those who have lost their souls, they will not believe. [13]And to Him belongs whatever dwells in the night and the day. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

14 Say: Shall I take for a friend other than Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, and He feeds and is not fed? Say: I am commanded to be the first of those who submit. And do not be of those who set up partners (with Allah). [15]Say: Surely I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a grievous day. [16]He from whom it is averted on that day, Allah indeed has had mercy on him. And this is a manifest achievement. [17]And if Allah touch *y*ou with affliction, there is none to remove it but He. And if He touch *y*ou with good, He is Powerful over all things.[a] [18]And He is the Supreme, above His servants. And He is the Wise, the Aware.

19 Say: What thing is of most weight in testimony? Say: Allah is witness between you and me. And this Quran has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches.[b] Do you really bear witness that there are other gods with Allah? Say: I do not bear witness. Say: He is only One God, and surely I am innocent of what you set up (with Him). [20]Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons.[c] Those who have lost their souls, they will not believe.

Section 3: **Polytheists' witness against themselves**

21 And who is more unjust than one who forges a lie about Allah, or calls His messages a lie? Surely the wrongdoers will not be successful. [22]And on the day We gather them all together, then We shall say to those who set up partners (with Allah): Where are your associate-gods whom you asserted? [23]Then their excuse would be nothing but that they would say: By Allah, our Lord! — we did not set up partners. [24]See how they lie against their own souls, and what they forged shall fail them! [25]And some of them

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world: He has created all things for the benefit of man. Would He not deal equally mercifully with man in his spiritual needs and send a revelation to guide him?

a **(17)** The meaning is: Allah, being All-powerful, will bring good to you.

b **(19)** The Holy Prophet was thus a warner, not for the Arabs only, but for all people whom the Quran may reach, i.e., for the whole world.

c **(20)** For *as they recognize their sons*, see 2:146 and footnote.

listen to *y*ou, and We have cast veils over their hearts so that they do not understand it, and a deafness into their ears. And (even) if they see every sign they will not believe in it.[a] So much so that when they come to *y*ou they only dispute with *y*ou — those who disbelieve say: This is nothing but stories of the ancients.

26 And they forbid (others) from it, and they keep away from it; and they ruin none but their own souls while they do not perceive. **27**And if *y*ou could see when they are made to stand before the Fire, and say: If only we were sent back, we would not reject the messages of our Lord but would be from among the believers. **28**No, what they concealed before will become manifest to them. And if they were sent back, they would certainly go back to what they are forbidden, and surely they are liars.[b] **29**And they say: There is nothing but our life of this world and we shall not be raised again. **30**And if *y*ou could see when they are made to stand before their Lord! He will say: Is not this the truth? They will say: Certainly, by our Lord! He will say: Taste then the punishment because you disbelieved.

Section 4: **Rejection of the Truth**

31 They are losers indeed who reject the meeting with Allah, until when the hour comes upon them suddenly,[c] they will say: O our grief for our neglecting it! And they bear their burdens on their backs. Now surely evil is what they bear! **32**And this world's life is but an idle sport and play. And certainly the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who keep their duty. Do you not then understand? **33**We know indeed that what they say grieves *y*ou, for surely they do not call *y*ou a liar, but the wrongdoers deny the messages

***a* (25)** Veils were cast over their hearts because they would not believe even if they saw all the signs. As the words that follow show, they came to the Prophet, not for the purpose of listening to and pondering over what he said, but to dispute with him. The veils were due to their own actions; see 2:10 and footnote.

***b* (28)** The evil consequences of their deeds were hidden in this life, but they will become manifest in the life after death. And since, if they were sent back, the evil consequences of evil deeds would again be hidden from the physical eye, they would revert to evil deeds.

***c* (31)** By the *hour* is meant their *doom*, as well as the hour of the *final judgment*.

of Allah.[a] **34**And messengers indeed were rejected before *y*ou, but they were patient when rejected and persecuted, until Our help came to them. And there is none to change the words of Allah.[b] And there has already come to *y*ou some information about the messengers. **35**And if their turning away is hard on *y*ou, then, if *y*ou can, seek an opening into the earth or a ladder to heaven, to bring them a sign![c] And if Allah pleased, He would certainly have gathered them all to guidance, so do not be from among the ignorant. **36**Only those accept who listen. And (as for) the dead, Allah will raise them, then to Him they will be returned.[d]

37 And they say: Why has not a sign been sent down to him from his Lord? Say: Surely Allah is Able to send down a sign, but most of them do not know.[e] **38**And there is no animal in the earth, nor a bird that flies on its two wings, but (they are) communities like yourselves. We have not neglected anything in the Book. Then to their Lord will they be gathered.[f] **39**And those who reject Our

***a* (33)** The Holy Prophet was known among them as *al-Amīn*, i.e., *the Faithful* or *the Truthful one*. His worst enemies at the height of their enmity admitted that he had never told a lie. It was after he received the Divine revelation that he was called a liar, and hence it was really a denial of the Divine revelation, not a denial as to the Prophet's truthfulness.

***b* (34)** The context shows that by *the words of Allah* here are meant *the prophecies* foretelling the triumph of Truth and the overthrow of all opposition.

***c* (35)** By *sign* is meant a sign that should bring all to guidance. Their doom was pronounced, and that word must be fulfilled, as affirmed in the previous verse; but the demand of the people to be overawed into an immediate submission to the Prophet by a sign was not in accordance with the Divine Law.

***d* (36)** Those addressed by the Holy Prophet are here divided into two classes: (1) those who listen: they accept him and become believers; (2) those who are spiritually dead and pay no heed to his warning. Even the latter are not to be despaired of, for Allah will raise them too to spiritual life. Their being returned to Allah stands here for their ultimate acceptance of the Truth.

***e* (37)** Allah did send the very sign demanded, as we find the Arabs submitting to the Holy Prophet almost in a body after the conquest of Makkah.

***f* (38)** Other creatures are all provided for by Allah as human beings are, so far as physical needs are concerned. But man's nature aspires to something higher, and it is to satisfy that spiritual craving that prophets are sent. This verse, moreover, points, as it were, to two classes of people — those who, like beasts, are wholly bent on earth and cannot rise, and those who rise like birds, soaring upward to the higher spiritual regions. The concluding words of the verse — *then*

messages are deaf and dumb, in darkness. Whom Allah pleases He leaves in error. And whom He pleases He places on the right way. **40**Say: See, if the punishment of Allah overtake you or the hour come upon you, will you call on others than Allah, if you are truthful? **41**No, Him you call upon, so He removes that for which you pray, if He pleases, and you forget what you set up as partners (with Him).

Section 5: **Consequences of rejection**

42 And indeed We sent (messengers) to nations before *y*ou then We seized them with distress and affliction that they might humble themselves. **43**Yet why did they not, when Our punishment came to them, humble themselves? But their hearts hardened and the devil made all that they did seem good to them. **44**Then, when they neglected what they had been admonished with, We opened for them the gates of all things.[a] Until, when they rejoiced in what they were given, We seized them suddenly; then they were in utter despair! **45**So the roots of the people who did wrong were cut off. And praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.[b]

46 Say: Have you considered that if Allah should take away your hearing and your sight and seal your hearts, who is the god besides Allah that can bring it to you? See how We repeat the messages yet they turn away! **47**Say: See, if the punishment of Allah should overtake you suddenly or openly, will any be destroyed but the wrongdoing people? **48**And We do not send messengers but as bearers of good news and warners; then whoever believes and acts aright, they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. **49**And as for those who reject Our messages, punishment will afflict them because they transgressed. **50**Say: I do not say to you, I have with me the treasures of Allah, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel; I follow only what is revealed to me.

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to their Lord will they be gathered — are in reference to mankind and, as compared with other animals, point to the Higher life, the life eternal in God. There is no mention here or anywhere else in the Quran of the lower animals being raised to a new life for Judgment.

a **(44)** By *opening the gates of all things* is meant that all comforts of life were made accessible to them.

b **(45)** By cutting off the *roots* is meant the destruction of the ringleaders in particular.

Say: Are the blind and the seeing alike? Do you not then reflect? [a]

Section 6: **Reward of believers**

51 And warn with it those who fear that they will be gathered to their Lord — there is no protector for them, nor any intercessor besides Him — so that they may keep their duty. **52**And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord, morning and evening, desiring only His pleasure. Neither are *y*ou accountable for them at all, nor are they accountable for *y*ou at all, that *y*ou should drive them away and thus be one of the wrongdoers.[b] **53**And thus do We try some of them by others so that they say: Are these they upon whom Allah has conferred benefit from among us? [c] Does not Allah best know the grateful? **54**And when those who believe in Our messages come to *y*ou, say: Peace be on you, your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself, (so) that if anyone of you does evil in ignorance, then turns after that and acts aright, then He is Forgiving, Merciful. **55**And thus do We make distinct the messages so that the way of the guilty may become clear.

Section 7: **Divine Judgment**

56 Say: I am forbidden to serve those whom you call upon besides Allah. Say: I do not follow your low desires, for then indeed

***a* (50)** Appearing among a superstitious and ignorant people, the Holy Prophet could have claimed any supernatural powers for himself. But he told them plainly that he was a man who had no treasures, nor did he lay claim as a man to know the secrets of the future, nor did he profess to be any more than a mortal. Allah had revealed His will to him, and he faithfully followed and translated into practice everything that he received from on High. And as he himself was, so he wanted others to be. The unique greatness of the Prophet lies in the fact that he never tried to put himself before people as superhuman.

***b* (52)** This verse was revealed when some leading Quraish expressed their willingness to accept the Prophet if the poorer Muslims were not allowed to remain in his company at the time. The poor and the rich are here brought to the same level; they have equal claims to learn and practise the truth. Truth is equally accessible to all. To the religion of Islam, no aristocracy is known. Before the Great Master the differences of rank, wealth and colour sink into insignificance, and therefore before Allah's Messenger, as before Allah Himself, they must all stand upon one level. *Everyone is answerable for what he does* is the golden principle preached by Islam.

***c* (53)** The simple and decisive answer given above no doubt wounded the pride of the wealthy Quraish, who were required to sit along with the poor slaves whom they never treated as human beings, and thus they were tried.

I should go astray and should not be of the guided ones. **57**Say: Surely I have manifest proof from my Lord and you call it a lie. I do not have with me (the power to bring) what you seek to hasten. The judgment is only Allah's. He relates the truth and He is the Best of deciders. **58**Say: If I had with me (the power to bring) what you seek to hasten, the matter would have certainly been decided between you and me. And Allah best knows the wrongdoers.

59 And with Him are the treasures of the unseen — none knows them but He. And He knows what is in the land and the sea. And no leaf falls but He knows it, nor is there a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green or dry, but (it is all) in a clear book.[a] **60**And He it is Who takes your souls at night, and He knows what you earn by day, then He raises you up in it that an appointed term may be fulfilled. Then to Him is your return, then He will inform you of what you did.

Section 8: **Divine Judgment**

61 And He is the Supreme above His servants, and He sends keepers over you; until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers cause him to die, and they are not remiss. **62**Then are they sent back to Allah, their Master, the True one. Now surely His is the judgment and He is swiftest in taking account.

63 Say: Who is it that delivers you from the calamities of the land and the sea? (When) you call upon Him, in humility and in secret: If He deliver us from this, we will certainly be of the grateful ones. **64**Say: Allah delivers you from this and from every distress, yet you set up partners (with Him). **65**Say: He has the power to send on you a punishment from above you or from beneath your feet, or to throw you into confusion, (making you) of different factions, and make some of you taste the violence of others. See how We repeat the messages that they may understand![b]

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a **(59)** The clear book is the great law of cause and effect. The falling of the leaf indicates that its power to draw nourishment has come to an end; thus do individuals and nations fall. The grain in the darkness of the earth stands for the mission of the Prophet, for that grain was destined to sprout forth, growing into a tree of exceptional proportions. The "green" indicates those people that prosper and the "dry" those that must fall off.

b **(65)** The three forms of punishment were witnessed by the Holy Prophet's

66 And *y*our people call it a lie and it is the Truth. Say: I am not put in charge of you. **67**For every prophecy is a term, and you will soon come to know (it).[a] **68**And when *y*ou see those who talk nonsense about Our messages, withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse. And if the devil cause *y*ou to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people. **69**And those who keep their duty are not accountable for them at all but (theirs) is only to remind; perhaps they may guard against evil.

70 And leave those who take their religion for a play and an idle sport, and whom this world's life has deceived, and remind (people) with this (message) in case a soul be destroyed for what it has earned. It has besides Allah no friend nor intercessor, and though it offer every compensation, it will not be accepted from it. Those are they who are destroyed for what they earn. For them is a drink of boiling water and a painful punishment, because they disbelieved.

Section 9: **Abraham's argument for Divine Unity**

71 Say: Shall we call, besides Allah, on that which does not benefit us nor harm us, and shall we be turned back on our heels after Allah has guided us? Like one whom the devils cause to follow his low desires, in bewilderment in the earth — he has

opponents later on. *A punishment from above* took the form of a storm during the well-known Battle of the Allies, when an army between ten and twenty thousand strong took to flight on account of a great storm; *a punishment from beneath* took the form of a drought which brought great affliction upon the people of Makkah for seven years; while they were made to taste the violence at the hands of the Muslims in the battles which they themselves started and which brought about the final disruption of the power of the Quraish. Applied to the modern West, the *punishment from above* and *punishment from below* are, respectively, the tyranny of the bourgeois and the tyranny of the proletariate. The capitalists first tyrannized labour and then communism wreaked vengeance on the capitalists. To these two punishments is now added a third. The whole world is divided into parties which aim at each other's destruction and the violence of man against man has reached a peak unthought of by the world. Whole cities with their millions of residents are turned into graves in the twinkling of an eye, and this wholesale destruction of man by man is considered as the greatest feat of material civilization.

a **(67)** The prophecy of the vanquishment of the powerful opponents of Islam is declared with even greater emphasis than in the earlier stage of the Prophet's mission, despite the apparent triumph of opposition to his cause which had succeeded in scattering the few people who accepted Islam.

companions who call him to the right way (saying), Come to us. Say: Surely the guidance of Allah, that is the (true) guidance. And we are commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds, **72**and that you should keep up prayer and keep your duty to Him. And He it is to Whom you shall be gathered. **73**And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth with truth. And when He says, Be, it is.[a] His word is the truth and His is the kingdom on the day when the trumpet is blown.[b] The Knower of the unseen and the seen; and He is the Wise, the Aware.

74 And when Abraham said to his sire, Āzar:[c] Do *y*ou take idols for gods? Surely I see *y*ou and *y*our people in manifest error. **75**And thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that he might have certainty.[d] **76**So when the night overshadowed him, he saw a star. He said: Is this my Lord? [e] So when it set, he said: I do not love the setting ones. **77**Then when he

***a* (73-1)** These words are generally used when the bringing about of a great change — a change which seems to be impossible to people — is meant.

***b* (73-2)** The reference may be either to the Resurrection when human beings will be raised to be brought to judgment, or the great spiritual resurrection which was to be brought about through the Holy Prophet when the whole of Arabia was destined to receive a new life, the life spiritual, or perhaps to the still greater spiritual resurrection when the whole of humanity was destined to receive a new life through the triumph of Islam.

***c* (74)** Whether Āzar was the father of Abraham, or his grandfather or uncle, is a much disputed point. The word *ab* means *a father* as well as *an ancestor*, and in 2:133 it is applied to *an uncle* because there Ishmael is spoken of as an *ab* of Jacob. Abraham's father (*wālid*) is indicated in 14:41 to be a believer, while the sire (*ab*) is elsewhere mentioned as having stuck to idolatry till his death (9:114). Hence I prefer *sire* as the significance of the word.

***d* (75)** Showing Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth signifies granting him an insight into the Divine laws of nature working in the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. This insight had convinced him that Allah was the real controller of the universe, while the sun, the moon, the stars and other heavenly bodies, were only His creation and subject to His laws.

***e* (76)** These words, which literally mean *this is my Lord*, do not contain Abraham's conviction. The words are either uttered by way of surprise or, as translated here, the phrase may be interrogatory, expressing disapproval. It should be borne in mind that Abraham never worshipped idols or the heavenly bodies like his people. He has already been spoken of in v. 74 as denouncing the idol-worship of his people, and in v. 75 as possessing certainty of faith in One God. Further on, we find it clearly stated in v. 83 that what is related here was an argument by which Abraham tried to convince his people that they worshipped false deities, which were themselves subject to Divine laws.

saw the moon rising, he said: Is this my Lord? So when it set, he said: If my Lord had not guided me, I should certainly be of the people who are in error. **78**Then when he saw the sun rising, he said: Is this my Lord? Is this the greatest? So when it set, he said: My people, I am clear of what you set up (with Allah). **79**Surely I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of those who set up partners (with Allah).

80 And his people disputed with him. He said: Do you dispute with me respecting Allah and He has guided me indeed? And I do not fear in any way those that you set up with Him, unless my Lord please. My Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge. Will you not then be mindful? **81**And how should I fear what you have set up (with Him), while you do not fear to set up partners with Allah for which He has sent down to you no authority? Which then of the two parties is surer of security, if you know? **82**Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with wrongdoing — for them is security and they go aright.

Section 10: **Prophets among Abraham's descendants**

83 And this was Our argument which We gave to Abraham against his people. We exalt in degrees whom We please. Surely *y*our Lord is Wise, Knowing. **84**And We gave him Isaac and Jacob — each did We guide; and Noah did We guide before, and of his descendants, David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. And thus do We reward those who do good (to others); **85**and Zacharias and John and Jesus and Elias — each one (of them) was of the righteous; **86**and Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot — and each one (of them) We made to excel the people; **87**and some of their fathers and their descendants and their brethren. And We chose them and guided them to the right way.

88 This is Allah's guidance with which He guides whom He pleases of His servants. And if they had set up partners (with Him), all that they did would have been fruitless. **89**These are they to whom We gave the Book and authority and prophecy.[a] Therefore if

***a* (89)** Each one of the prophets was given three things. The first was the *Kitāb, the Book*, or the Divine revelation which the prophet was granted to guide

these disbelieve in it, We have indeed entrusted it to a people who are not disbelievers in it. **90**These are they whom Allah guided, so follow their guidance. Say: I do not ask you for any reward for it. It is nothing but a Reminder for the nations.[a]

Section 11: **Truth of Divine Revelation**

91 And they do not honour Allah with the honour due to Him, when they say: Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal.[b] Say: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought, a light and a guidance to people — you make it into (scattered) papers,[c] which you show and you conceal much? And you are taught what neither you nor your fathers knew. Say: Allah. Then leave them sporting in their idle talk. **92**And this is a Blessed Book We have revealed, verifying what is (already) before it, and that *y*ou may warn the

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people aright. The second is called *ḥukm*, which means *authority to judge*. This shows that every prophet received authority directly from God, and it was by Divine authority that he judged his people. The third is *nubuwwat*, which means *prophethood* or *the gift of prophecy*. The Book contains directions for guidance of the people and *nubuwwat* is the prophetical part which is meant to strengthen faith. Thus the Holy Prophet Muhammad was granted the gift of prophecy long before he was granted the Book which began with the words, *Read in the name of your Lord* (96:1). Further there is a vast number of his prophecies which are contained in the Hadith and which do not form a part of the Book, the Quran.

a **(90)** The Prophet is told to follow the guidance of all the earlier prophets because his message was for all the nations to whom previous prophets had separately come. Hence the Quran is called a Reminder, showing that it was meant for all the nations, to whom it was a reminder of what they had received before. The Prophet is, in fact, here told that he was now the representative of all the prophets that had gone before him, and therefore possessed all the excellences which were granted to those prophets separately.

b **(91-1)** The words *Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal* may mean a total denial of God revealing Himself to man or simply a denial of revelation to the Holy Prophet. The Jews and the Christians are told in this verse that the same God Who revealed a book to Moses, containing a clear prophecy of a *prophet like him*, has now in fulfilment of that prophecy sent the like of Moses. Their only answer to that clear prophecy was that they would not mention it or talk of it at all — *and you conceal much*. The deniers of Divine revelation are also told, more generally, that the proof of revelation was in the *knowledge* which it gave — *you are taught what neither you nor your fathers knew.*

c **(91-2)** The book was not *kept intact;* hence its description as *scattered papers*.

mother-town [a] and those around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter believe in it, and they keep a guard over their prayers.

93 And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says, Revelation has been granted to me, while nothing has been revealed to him; and he who says: I can reveal the like of what Allah has revealed? [b] And if *y*ou could see when the wrong-doers are in the agonies of death and the angels stretch forth their hands, (saying): Yield up your souls. This day you are awarded a punishment of disgrace because you spoke against Allah other than truth, and (because) you scorned His messages. **94**And certainly you have come to Us one by one as We created you at first, and you have left behind your backs what We gave you. And We do not see with you your intercessors about whom you asserted that they were (Allah's) partners in respect to you. Certainly the ties between you are now cut off and what you asserted has failed you.

Section 12: **Ultimate triumph of the Truth**

95 Surely Allah causes the grain and the date-stone to germinate. He brings forth the living from the dead and He is the bringer forth of the dead from the living. That is Allah. How are you then turned away (from truth)! [c] **96**He is the Cleaver of the daybreak; and He has made the night for rest, and the sun and the moon for reckoning. That is the measuring of the Mighty, the Knowing. [d] **97**And He it is Who has made the stars for you that you might follow the right way by them in the darkness of the land and the sea. Indeed

***a* (92)** *Umm al-Qurā* or *the mother of the towns* is the title by which Makkah is known. The reason is not only that it was both the political and the spiritual centre of Arabia, but also because it was destined to be the universal spiritual centre — the real mother of the whole world.

***b* (93)** These words declare the Holy Prophet free of having forged a lie against Allah. The claim "I can reveal the like of what Allah has revealed" are the words of those who refuse to believe in the truth of Divine revelation.

***c* (95)** The preaching of the Holy Prophet is likened to the sowing of the seed which, though to all appearance it is lost in the earth, soon springs forth into a large tree. The bringing forth the living from the dead is the bringing forth a living people from the spiritually dead Arabs, and the bringing forth the dead from the living alludes to the spiritual death of those who had been previously granted spiritual life through Divine revelation.

***d* (96)** The darkness prevailing in the earth would soon be dispelled, and would give place to light, even as, with the break of the morning, darkness gives place to light.

We have made plain the signs for a people who know.[a] **98**And He it is Who has brought you into being from a single soul, then there is (for you) an abode and a repository.[b] Indeed We have made plain the signs for a people who understand.

99 And He it is Who sends down water from the clouds, then We bring forth with it buds of all (plants), then We bring forth from it green (foliage), from which We produce clustered grain; and of the date-palm, of the sheaths of it, come forth clusters (of dates) within reach; and gardens of grapes and the olive and the pomegranate, alike and unlike. Look at the fruit of it when it bears fruit and the ripening of it. Surely there are signs in this for a people who believe! **100**And they regard the jinn to be partners with Allah,[c] and He created them, and they falsely attribute to Him sons and daughters without knowledge. Glory be to Him, and supremely exalted is He above what they ascribe (to Him)!

Section 13: **Gradual progress**

101 Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth! How could He have a son when He has no consort? And He created everything, and He is the Knower of all things.[d] **102**That is Allah, your Lord. There is no god but He, the Creator of all things; therefore serve Him, and He has charge of all things. **103**Vision cannot comprehend Him, and He comprehends (all) vision; and He is the Knower of subtleties, the Aware.[e]

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a **(97)** The Holy Prophet is likened to the sun, and those who receive light from him and transmit it to others are likened to the stars. The analogy is that He Who makes light to guide you physically could not have neglected your spiritual guidance.

b **(98)** The *abode* may indicate *this life* and the repository *the grave*.

c **(100)** The reference is either to the dualistic doctrine of the Magi, who thought that while Allah was the creator of good, the devil was the creator of evil, or to the Arab belief that the *jinn* had a hand in the transaction of their affairs, or in bringing them good fortune or ill luck.

d **(101)** This verse and those that follow describe the transcendental Unity of the Divine Being. To attribute a son to Him is to acknowledge that He had a consort; otherwise the word *son* will have to be taken simply as a metaphor.

e **(103)** The physical vision of man, working as it does only within narrow limits and being able only to see bodies, cannot comprehend the *Infinite One*. He is the all-pervading Spirit, and can be seen only with the spiritual eye.

104 Clear proofs have indeed come to you from your Lord; so whoever sees, it is for the good of his own soul; and whoever is blind, it is to its harm. And I am not a keeper over you. **105**And thus do We repeat the messages, and that they may say, *Y*ou have studied; and that We may make it clear to a people who know. **106**Follow what is revealed to *y*ou from *y*our Lord — there is no god but He; and turn away from those who set up partners (with Allah). **107**And if Allah had pleased, they would not have set up others (with Him). And We have not appointed *y*ou a keeper over them, and *y*ou are not in charge of them.

108 And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, in case, exceeding the limits, they abuse Allah through ignorance.[a] Thus to every people have We made their deeds seem good; then to their Lord is their return so He will inform them of what they did. **109**And they swear their strongest oaths by Allah that if a sign comes to them they would certainly believe in it. Say: Signs are with Allah. And what should make you know that when they come they do not believe? [b] **110**And We turn their hearts and their sights, just as they did not believe in it the first time; and We leave them in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on.[c]

Section 14: **Idolaters' opposition**

Part 8

111 And even if We send down to them the angels and the dead speak to them and We bring together all things before them, they would not believe unless Allah please, but most of them

***a* (108)** Here Muslims are forbidden to abuse even the idols of other people, though their worship is condemned in the strongest terms.

***b* (109)** Many signs of the Holy Prophet's truth had appeared while he was still at Makkah, but they still went on demanding signs. The reply, "signs are with Allah", means that the sign which they demanded would be shown and that Allah had the power to show all kinds of signs. But even then they would not believe. The first sign of the overthrow of the power of the Quraish appeared in the Battle of Badr, but they did not believe even then.

***c* (110)** The *turning of their hearts and sights* is *Allah's leaving them in their inordinacy*, as explained by the verse itself. And even this is due to their own action in rejecting the truth. When an attitude of enmity is assumed towards the truth, the heart becomes estranged from it, and this growing estrangement is termed the turning away of the heart from it.

are ignorant.[a] **112**And thus did We make for every prophet an enemy, the devils from among the people and the jinn, some of them inspiring others with gilded speech to deceive (them).[b] And if *y*our Lord pleased, they would not do it, so leave them alone with what they forge — **113**And that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline to it, and that they may be pleased with it, and that they may earn what they are earning.

114 Shall I then seek a judge other than Allah, when He it is Who has sent down to you the Book fully explained? And those whom We have given the Book know that it is revealed by *y*our Lord with truth, so do not be one of the disputers. **115**And the word of *y*our Lord has been accomplished truly and justly. There is none who can change His words; and He is the Hearer, the Knower.[c] **116**And if *y*ou obey most of those in the earth, they will lead *y*ou astray from Allah's way. They follow nothing but conjecture, and they only lie. **117**Surely *y*our Lord — He knows best who goes astray from His way, and He knows best the guided ones.

118 Eat, then, of that on which Allah's name has been mentioned, if you are believers in His messages.[d] **119**And what reason have you that you should not eat of that on which Allah's name is mentioned, when He has already made plain to you what He has

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***a* (111)** There are always some people who turn a deaf ear to every argument, and it is of such leaders of evil that this verse speaks; see next verse. The coming of the angels stands for the execution of the decree of their punishment. The speaking of the dead refers either to the raising of the spiritually dead to life (see v. 122), or to the evidence of those who had passed away before the Prophet, being given through their writings. And lastly, by the bringing together of all things is meant the bringing together of things relating to their punishment. The meaning is that some of the opponents are so blind that the clearest of signs or proofs would not convince them.

***b* (112)** By the people and the jinn here are apparently meant the ordinary people and the leaders, suggesting to each other varnished tales of falsehood. See later v. 128 footnote 1 for a fuller discussion of the word *jinn*.

***c* (115)** The *word* signifies the prophetic word; see 6:34 footnote.

***d* (118)** The establishment of the doctrine of Divine Unity, which is the object of this chapter, required the abolition of all idolatrous practices, among which was the practice of slaughtering animals in the names of idols. It is allowed to Muslims to slaughter animals for food, but Allah's name must be mentioned when the animal is slaughtered. This is also a reminder to man that this act of the taking of a life, even though it is the life of an animal, is made lawful only by Divine permission, for the attainment of a necessary purpose.

forbidden to you — except what you are compelled to? [a] And surely many lead (people) astray by their low desires through ignorance. Surely *y*our Lord — He best knows the transgressors. **120** And avoid open sins and secret ones. Surely they who earn sin will be rewarded for what they have earned.[b] **121** And do not eat of that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned, and that is surely a transgression.[c] And certainly the devils inspire their friends to contend with you; and if you obey them, you will surely be those who set up partners (with Allah).

Section 15: **The chief opponents**

122 Is he who was dead, then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in darkness from which he cannot come forth? [d] Thus their doings are made to seem good to the disbelievers. **123** And thus have We made in every town the leaders of its guilty ones, that they may make plans in it. And they plan only against themselves, and they do not perceive. **124** And when a message comes to them they say: We will not believe till we are given the like of what Allah's messengers are given. Allah best knows where to place His message. Humiliation from Allah and severe punishment will surely befall the guilty for their planning.

125 So whomsoever Allah intends to guide, He expands his breast for Islam, and whomsoever He intends to leave in error, He makes his breast close (and) narrow as though he were ascending upwards. Thus does Allah lay uncleanness on those who do

a **(119)** The reference in these words is to what is said in an earlier revelation; see 16:115. The same subject is again referred to in 6:145, as also in 2:173 and in greater detail in 5:3, both of these being revelations at Madinah.

b **(120)** The Muslim is here commanded to consider *open* and *secret* sins to be equally hateful. In fact there are very few people who commit open sins as compared with those who are guilty of secret sins.

c **(121)** These words are explained by the majority as containing only a prohibition against the eating of that which is slaughtered in the name of others than Allah.

d **(122)** These words explain what is meant by the raising of the dead to life through the prophets. Through the Quran the dead were raised to life *and given a light* by which they showed the way to others. The concluding words of the verse show that, despite witnessing this great transformation, the leaders of mischief went on opposing the Truth as if it were a good deed.

not believe.[a] **126**And this is the path of *y*our Lord, (a) straight (path). Indeed We have made the messages clear for a people who are mindful. **127**Theirs is the abode of peace with their Lord, and He is their Friend because of what they do.

128 And on the day when He will gather them all together: O assembly of jinn,[b] you took away a great part of the people. And their friends from among the people will say: Our Lord, some of us profited by others and we have reached our appointed term which You appointed for us. He will say: The Fire is your abode — you shall abide in it, except as Allah please.[c] Surely *y*our Lord is Wise, Knowing. **129**And thus do We make some of the wrongdoers to befriend others on account of what they earn.

Section 16: **Evils of idolatry**

130 O community of jinn and people, did not messengers come to you from among you, relating to you My messages and warning you of the meeting of this day of yours? [d] They will say: We bear witness against ourselves. And this world's life deceived them, and they will bear witness against themselves that they were disbelievers. **131**This is because *y*our Lord would not destroy towns

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a **(125)** The concluding words of the verse show that uncleanness of the heart, which makes a person's *breast close and narrow*, as though *he were ascending upwards*, is the result of a man's own disbelief and rejection of the truth.

b **(128-1)** The word *jinn* is derived from *janna*, meaning *he covered* or *concealed* or *hid* or *protected*. The class of beings that goes under this name stands in the Quran for the spirits of evil or the beings that invite man to evil, as opposed to the angels, who invite him to good, both being alike invisible to the human eye. But there is a wider use of the word in Arabic literature as well as in the Quran. One signification of the word is explained under 72:1. But the word is also applied in the Quran to powerful leaders who, through their importance and detachment from the masses, do not mix freely with them, so they remain distant or "hidden from their eyes". Verses 129–131 show that by the *jinn* here are meant the human leaders of evil.

c **(128-2)** The words *except as Allah please* indicate that those in hell shall after all be delivered from it.

d **(130)** By calling the jinn and people a single community, the Quran has made it clear that the jinn and the people spoken of here are not two different classes of beings. Again, the jinn and the people are told that messengers had come to them *from among them*, i.e., from among jinn and people. But as the only messengers spoken of in the Quran and other reliable histories of prophets are those who belong to mankind, it follows that the jinn spoken of here belong to mankind, and not to any other class of creation.

unjustly while their people are negligent.[a] **132**And for all are degrees according to their doings. And *y*our Lord is not heedless of what they do. **133**And *y*our Lord is the Self-sufficient One, the Lord of mercy. If He please, He may remove you, and make whom He pleases successors after you, just as He raised you up from the offspring of other people. **134**Surely what you are promised will come to pass, and you cannot escape (it). **135**Say: My people, act according to your ability, I too am acting; so you will soon come to know for whom is the (good) end of the abode. Surely the wrongdoers will not succeed.

136 And they set apart a portion for Allah out of what He has created of crops and cattle, and say: This is for Allah — so they assert — and this for our associate-gods. Then that which is for their associate-gods does not reach Allah, and that which is for Allah reaches their associate-gods. Evil is what they judge.[b] **137**And thus their associate-gods have made it seem good to many idolaters the killing of their children, that they may cause them to perish and obscure for them their religion.[c] And if Allah had pleased, they would not have done it, so leave them alone with what they forge.

138 And they say: Such and such cattle and crops are prohibited — none shall eat them except such as we please — so they assert — and cattle whose backs are forbidden, and cattle on which they would not mention Allah's name [d] — forging a lie against Him.

***a* (131)** That is, while the reminder and the warning had not yet come to them. Or, the words mean that it is not for negligence that nations are destroyed; it is only when they become wrongdoers and spread mischief in the world that they are overtaken by punishment in this life.

***b* (136)** It was a custom among the Arab idolaters to set apart certain portions of the produce of their fields and their cattle, one portion for Allah and another portion for the idols. The portion for idols was always applied to their use, but the portion set apart for Allah, though ordinarily spent to feed the poor and the needy, was in certain cases diverted to the use of the idols. The portion for the idols was handed over to the priests.

***c* (137)** This refers to the practice of killing or burying alive the female children, and also to the human sacrifices to idols, as they sometimes vowed that, if they had a number of sons, they would sacrifice one of them to an idol. By introducing these superstitious and evil customs they were making confused and obscure the true religion — the religion of the service of One God.

***d* (138)** That is, such as were sacrificed in the name of idols. All these, along with what is said in the next two verses, are denounced as being idolatrous practices.

He will recompense them for what they forge. **139**And they say: What is in the wombs of such and such cattle is reserved for our males, and forbidden to our wives, and if it be stillborn, they are partners in it. He will reward them for their (false) attribution. Surely He is Wise, Knowing. **140**They are losers indeed who kill their children foolishly without knowledge, and forbid what Allah has provided for them, forging a lie against Allah. They indeed go astray, and are not guided.

Section 17: **Idolaters' self-imposed prohibitions**

141 And He it is Who produces gardens, trellised and untrellised, and palms and seed-produce of which the fruits are of various sorts, and olives and pomegranates, like and unlike. Eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its reaping, and do not be extravagant. Surely He does not love the extravagant; **142**and of the cattle (He has created) some for burden and some for slaughter. Eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of the devil. Surely he is your open enemy — **143**eight in pairs — of the sheep two and of the goats two. Say: Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or what the wombs of the two females contain? Inform me with knowledge, if you are truthful;[a] **144**and of the camels two and of the cows two. Say: Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or what the wombs of the two females contain? Or were you witnesses when Allah enjoined you this? Who is then more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah to lead people astray without knowledge? Surely Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

Section 18: **Prohibited foods**

145 Say: I do not find in what is revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat of, except if it is what dies of itself, or blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine — for that surely is unclean — or what is a transgression, other than the name of Allah having been invoked on it.[b] But whoever is driven by necessity, not

***a* (143)** The Arabs considered those animals which were otherwise lawful for them to be unlawful in particular cases. These practices, which were all superstitious, resulting from idol-worship, are here condemned.

***b* (145)** The reason for the prohibition of what dies of itself and blood and

desiring nor exceeding the limit, then surely *y*our Lord is Forgiving, Merciful. **146**And to those who are Jews We forbade every animal having claws, and We forbade them the fat of oxen and sheep, except such as was on their backs or the entrails or what was mixed with bones. This was a punishment We gave them on account of their rebellion, and We are surely Truthful. **147**But if they reject *y*ou, then say: Your Lord is the Lord of all-encompassing mercy; and His punishment cannot be averted from the guilty people.[a]

148 Those who set up partners (with Allah) say: If Allah pleased we would not have set up partners (with Him) nor our fathers, nor would we have made anything unlawful. Thus did those before them reject (the truth) until they tasted Our punishment. Say: Have you any knowledge so you would bring it forth to us? You only follow a conjecture and you only tell lies. **149**Say: Then Allah's is the conclusive argument; so if He had pleased, He would have guided you all.[b] **150**Say: Bring your witnesses who bear witness that Allah forbade this. If they bear witness, then do not bear witness with them. And do not follow the low desires of those who reject Our messages and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, and they make (others) equal with their Lord.

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swine's flesh is that these things are physically *unclean*, while the reason for the prohibition of animals on which other than Allah's name is invoked is that all things are to be avoided which are in any way associated with idolatry.

a **(147)** The all-encompassing mercy of Allah is mentioned even in speaking of those who rejected the Holy Prophet. It was because of the mercy of Allah that the disbelievers were not destroyed immediately; but as punishing the "guilty" is in itself a mercy towards the weak and the oppressed, they are warned that they will not escape punishment if they persist in their evil ways.

b **(149)** The previous verse records the statement of the disbelievers: "If Allah pleased we would not have set up partners with Him." The reply is that Allah reveals His will through His chosen messengers, so bring forth any Divine revelation that you possess sanctioning idolatry. The argument is here carried on further. Allah does not mislead people, but, in fact, He sends His prophets to guide them into the right path. His pleasure is therefore that everyone should walk in the right path and serve only one Master. That is the conclusive argument against the false assertion of the idolaters. The guidance of Allah is, moreover, brought through prophets, and people are never compelled to accept the right way; much less could they be compelled to follow the wrong course. Man was created with a will free within certain limits to act as he pleases.

Section 19: **Guiding rules of life**

151 Say: Come! I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you: Set up no partner with Him, and do good to parents, nor kill your children for (fear of) poverty — We provide for you and for them — nor go near to indecencies, open or secret, nor kill the soul which Allah has made sacred except in the course of justice. This He enjoins upon you that you may understand. **152**And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner,[a] until he attains his maturity. And give full measure and weight with equity — We do not impose on any soul a duty beyond its ability. And when you speak, be just, even (against) a relative.[b] And fulfil Allah's covenant. This He enjoins on you that you may be mindful; **153**and (know) that this is My path, the right one, so follow it, and do not follow (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way. This He enjoins on you that you may keep your duty. **154**Again, We gave the Book to Moses to complete (Our blessings) on him who would do good, and making plain all things[c] and a guidance and a mercy, so that they might believe in the meeting with their Lord.

Section 20: **The goal for the faithful**

155 And this is a Book We have revealed, full of blessings; so follow it and keep your duty that mercy may be shown to you, **156**in case you say that the Book was revealed only to two parties before us and we were truly unaware of what they read,[d] **157**or, you say: If the Book had been revealed to us, we would have been better guided than they. So indeed clear proof has come to you from your Lord, and guidance and mercy. Who is then more unjust than he who rejects Allah's messages and turns away from them? We reward those who turn away from Our messages with an evil punishment because they turned away.

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a **(152-1)** That is, unless you do it with the object of improving it or making it profitable. Wages of the guardian may be paid from it, for which see 4:6.

b **(152-2)** Islam requires a person to be so upright as not to be led away by the ties of relationship. Truth is not to be sacrificed to any interest, but every interest must be sacrificed to truth.

c **(154)** By *all things* are meant all those things needed for the guidance of the Israelites.

d **(156)** As in Arabia there lived only the Jews and the Christians besides the idolaters, the Arabs spoke of only two parties to whom the Book was given.

158 They only wait that the angels should come to them, or that *y*our Lord should come,[a] or that some of the signs of *y*our Lord should come. On the day when some of the signs of *y*our Lord come, its faith will not benefit a soul which did not believe before, nor earned good through its faith.[b] Say: Wait; we too are waiting. **159**As for those who split up their religion and became sects, *y*ou have no concern with them. Their affair is only with Allah, then He will inform them of what they did. **160**Whoever brings a good deed will have tenfold like it, and whoever brings an evil deed, will be recompensed only with the like of it, and they shall not be wronged.[c]

161 Say: As for me, my Lord has guided me to the right path — a right religion, the faith of Abraham, the upright one, and he was not of those who set up partners (with Allah). **162**Say: My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are surely for Allah, the Lord of the worlds — **163**no partner has He. And this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit.[d]

***a* (158-1)** For a similar expression see 2:210. Also v. 111 and note. Similar words occur also in 16:33: "They only wait that the angels should come to them or that *y*our Lord's command should come to pass." Here the words are *that your Lord should come*. Thus the coming of the Lord carries the same significance as the coming to pass of His command, or the execution of His decree, i.e., the final doom of the opponents. The coming of the angels stands for the smaller visitations or distresses the opponents witnessed in the battles which they fought to annihilate Islam, in which the coming of angels is spoken of; see 3:125–126, 8:9.

***b* (158-2)** The only time when faith does not benefit a soul is the approach of death, and hence I am of the opinion that by "some of the signs of your Lord" are meant clear signs of approach of death. A person's death is in one sense also his resurrection: "Whoever dies, his resurrection comes to pass" (*Mi<u>sh</u>kāt,* 26:6).

***c* (160)** No other sacred book gives such prominence to the quality of mercy in the Divine Being. While evil must have its evil consequence, it is only its like, but virtue brings a tenfold reward. According to a saying of the Holy Prophet, evil is pardoned or recompensed with its like, while good brings from a tenfold to a seven-hundredfold reward (Bukhari, 81:31, hadith 6491). Thus the verse mentions only the maximum punishment of evil and the minimum reward of good.

***d* (163)** The idea of entire submission to the Divine Being conveyed in the word *Islām* finds its perfect manifestation in the Holy Prophet, who is the first of the Muslims. Above even the noblest object that a person can set for himself stands the love of the Divine Being. It is the highest goal of human life, and every Muslim is taught to set that goal before himself.

164 Say: Shall I seek a Lord other than Allah, while He is the Lord of all things? And no soul earns (evil) but against itself. Nor does a bearer of burden bear another's burden.[a] Then to your Lord is your return, so He will inform you of that in which you differed.

165 And He it is Who has made you successors in the land and exalted some of you in rank above others, that He may try you by what He has given you. Surely *y*our Lord is Quick in retribution, and He is surely the Forgiving, the Merciful.[b]

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a **(164)** In these words the Christian doctrine of atonement is rejected by the Quran. Elsewhere we have: "That no bearer of burden bears another's burden, and that man can have nothing but what he strives for" (53:38–39). Every person who is born is called *a bearer of burden*, not because he is a sinner, but because he starts life with certain responsibilities of his own.

b **(165)** With the highest goal of life before them, Muslims are now told that they were going to be made rulers in the land. Their exaltation above others, however, was not due to their wealth or to their political power but simply to the fact that they submitted themselves to God, that their prayers and their sacrifices were not for their nation or their country but for God, Who was the *Rabb*, the Nourisher to perfection, of the whole of humanity. Hence they were a people who had the betterment of the whole of humanity in view. But even they are told, in the concluding words of the verse, that if they fall off and follow evil ways they will be requited, though the forgiveness and mercy of the Divine Being will ultimately take them by the hand.

Chapter 7

Al-A'rāf The Elevated Places

The title of this chapter is taken from the mention of *The Elevated Places* (v. 46) on which stand the perfect righteous servants of Allah. The main theme of this chapter is the truth of Divine revelation. It illustrates this by referring to the histories of several prophets, warning that the opponents of the Holy Prophet would meet the same fate as the opponents of the earlier prophets if they did not mend their ways. The chapter goes on to relate the history of Moses, as the Prophet Muhammad appeared in the likeness of Moses according to prophecies in the Torah. Towards the end, it gives the essence of the last and present chapter. This chapter was revealed at Makkah, just prior to the Emigration of the Holy Prophet.

Section 1: **Opponents' doom**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Best Knower, the Truthful.[a] **2**A Book revealed to *y*ou — so let there be no worry in *y*our heart concerning it [b] — that *y*ou may warn with it, and a Reminder to the believers.[c] **3**Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord and do not follow besides Him any guardians; little mindful are you!

4 And how many a town have We destroyed! So Our punishment came to it by night or while they slept at midday. **5**Yet their cry, when Our punishment came to them, was nothing but that they said: Surely we were wrongdoers. **6**Then certainly We shall question those to whom messengers were sent, and We shall question

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a **(1)** Of the four letters *alif, lām, mīm*, and *ṣād*, the first three are the same as at the commencement of ch. 2, for which see 2:1 footnote; while *ṣād* stands for *Ṣādiq*, meaning *Truthful*, Whose promise would not fail.

b **(2-1)** This parenthetical passage is introduced to console the Holy Prophet, who at this time was encountering the greatest opposition and was surrounded by difficulties on all sides.

c **(2-2)** The Quran is called a *reminder* because, being in consonance with human nature, it is a reminder of what is imprinted on human nature. It may, however, have the alternative meaning of *honour* or *eminence,* for which see 2:152.

the messengers,[a] **7**then surely We shall recount to them with knowledge, and We are never absent.

8 And the judging on that day will be just; so as for those whose good deeds are heavy, they are the successful. **9**And as for those whose good deeds are light, those are they who ruined their souls because they disbelieved in Our messages. **10**And certainly We established you in the earth and made in it means of livelihood for you; little thanks you give!

Section 2: **The devil's opposition to man**

11 And We indeed created you, then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels: Be submissive to Adam.[b] So they submitted, but not Iblīs; he was not of those who submitted. **12**He said: What hindered *y*ou from submitting when I commanded *y*ou? He said: I am better than he; You have created me of fire, while him You did create of dust.[c] **13**He said: Then get forth from this (state), for it is not for *y*ou to behave proudly in it. Go forth, therefore, surely *y*ou are a degraded one. **14**He said: Grant me respite till the day when they are raised.[d] **15**He said: Surely *y*ou are granted respite.

16 He said: As You have judged me to be in error, I will certainly lie in wait for them in Your straight path, **17**then I shall

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a **(6)** Those to whom messengers were sent will be questioned as to how they treated the messengers, and the latter as to how they were received.

b **(11)** That what is stated here of Adam is true of all mankind is made clear by the opening words of this verse. Human beings are created first, then fashioned, then the order is given to the angels to make submission to Adam, who in this sense typifies a human being. Thus the angels are really required to make submission to every human being.

c **(12)** Not only is Adam created from dust, but all human beings are spoken of as being similarly created; see 3:59 footnote, and see also 18:37, 22:5 and 30:20. As a contrast to man's creation from dust, the devil claims to have been created from fire. There may be a reference here to the nature of the temperaments of the two classes, human beings and devils. The Quran says elsewhere: "Man is created of haste" (21:37), which means that he is *hasty*. In like manner the devil's creation of fire may mean that he is made of a fiery temperament, while the perfect man is humble and meek, being created of dust, which stands for humility and meekness. Elsewhere it is stated that the jinn were created of fire (15:27), and also that Iblīs was one of the jinn (18:50).

d **(14)** The devil's grip continues only so long as man is not spiritually raised to life. The raising here stands for the spiritual resurrection of man. If the final Resurrection is meant, the significance would be that the devil would mislead man so long as man lives on this earth.

certainly come upon them from in front of them and from behind them, and from their right and from their left; and You will not find most of them thankful. **18**He said: Get out of it, despised, driven away. Whoever of them will follow *y*ou, I will certainly fill hell with you all.

19 And (We said): O Adam, dwell *y*ou and *y*our wife in the garden, and eat from wherever you wish, but do not go near this tree or you would be from among the unjust. **20**But the devil made an evil suggestion to them that he might make manifest to them their shame that had been hidden from them,[a] and he said: Your Lord has only forbidden you this tree that you may not become angels or become immortals. **21**And he swore to them both: Surely I am a sincere adviser to you — **22**thus he caused them to fall by deceit. So when they had tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them, and they both began to cover themselves with the leaves of the garden.[b] And their Lord called to them: Did I not forbid you that tree, and say to you that the devil is surely your open enemy? **23**They said: Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we shall certainly be from among the losers. **24**He said: Go forth — some of you are enemies of others. And there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time. **25**He said: In it shall you live, and in it shall you die, and from it shall you be raised.

Section 3: **Warning against the devil's insinuations**

26 O children of Adam, We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame and (clothing) for beauty; and clothing that guards against evil — that is the best.[c] This is of the

***a* (20)** The devil's suggestions always lead man to the disclosure of his shame.

***b* (22)** The covering with the leaves of the garden is the desire to make up by human effort any fault that may have been committed. The clothing that guards against evil, which is spoken of in v. 26 as being *the best clothing*, explains the meaning of *covering* here. Divine revelation points out to man the true way, enabling him to cover himself or guard himself against evil. And, further, the statement in v. 27, *pulling off from them both their clothing that he might show them their shame,* shows that covering with the leaves of the garden is an allegorical statement; see v. 27 footnote 1.

***c* (26)** Clothing at first simply served to cover shame; with further progress

messages of Allah that they may be mindful. **27**O children of Adam, do not let the devil seduce you, as he expelled your parents from the garden, pulling off from them both their clothing that he might show them their shame.[a] He surely sees you, he as well as his company, from where you do not see them. Surely We have made the devils to be the friends of those who do not believe.[b]

28 And when they commit an indecency they say: We found our fathers doing this, and Allah has commanded us to do it. Say: Surely Allah does not command indecency. Do you say of Allah what you do not know? **29**Say: My Lord commands (the doing of) justice. And set upright your faces at every time of prayer and call on Him, being sincere to Him in obedience. As He brought you into being, so shall you return. **30**Some has He guided, and others — error is justly their due.[c] Surely they took the devils for friends instead of Allah, and they think that they are rightly guided. **31**O children of Adam, attend to your adornment at every time of prayer, and eat and drink and do not be extravagant; surely He does not love the extravagant.[d]

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people sought to embellish their persons with it; but there is yet a third kind of clothing, says the Quran, which is the best, and that is *the clothing of piety*, literally *the clothing that guards one against evil*. It indicates a further step in the progress of man, for virtue is an embellishment of the mind, and when man has seen the good of embellishing his person, he will soon be aware of the necessity of embellishing his mind.

***a* (27-1)** That the clothing for the body is not meant here is clear from the fact that all men and women are warned against a similar attack of the devil. As to the clothing of which Adam was divested, there remains no doubt, when it is seen that the devil tries to divest every child of Adam of the same clothing: *it is the clothing that guards against evil*.

***b* (27-2)** It is because they do not believe in the Truth that the devils are made their friends. Those who sever their connection with the Source of purity must fall into impurity.

***c* (30)** Error is justly their due *because they have taken the devils for their friends*. Whoever continues to follow the devil must surely remain in error.

***d* (31)** Attending to one's adornment carries a double significance here. It requires adorning oneself physically, i.e., being clean and clothed appropriately for prayer, especially for the Friday and *ʿĪd* gatherings. But what is specially aimed at is adornment in a spiritual sense. A Muslim must attend to inner beautification, for prayer is really meant as an aid to the beauty of the soul. He must come to prayer with a heart free from all impurities and full of the highest aspirations and noblest sentiments.

Section 4: **Messengers sent for uplift of humanity**

32 Say: Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah,[a] which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good provisions? Say: These are for the believers in the life of this world, purely (theirs) on the day of Resurrection.[b] Thus do We make the messages clear for a people who know. **33**Say: My Lord forbids only indecencies, such of them as are apparent and such as are concealed, and sin and unjust rebellion, and that you set up with Allah partners for which He has sent down no authority, and that you say of Allah what you do not know.

34 And every nation has a term; so when its term comes they cannot postpone it an hour, nor can they bring it forward. **35**O children of Adam, if messengers come to you from among you relating to you My messages, then whoever guards against evil and acts aright — they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. **36**And those who reject Our messages and turn away from them haughtily — these are the companions of the Fire; they shall abide in it.

37 Who is then more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah or rejects His messages? These — their portion of the Book shall reach them;[c] until when Our messengers come to them causing them to die, they say: Where are those you used to call upon besides Allah? They would say: They are gone away from us. And they shall bear witness against themselves that they were disbelievers. **38**He will say: Enter into the Fire among the nations of jinn and people that have passed away before you. Every time a nation enters, it curses its sister;[d] until when they all follow one another into it, the last of them will say with regard to the first of them:[e]

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a **(32-1)** By *the adornment of Allah* is meant *the adornment which Allah has made lawful for people to avail themselves of*.

b **(32-2)** In the life of this world the believer and the disbeliever equally benefit by the good things, but in the life after death all good shall be exclusively for those who have accepted and acted on the right principles.

c **(37)** That is, the punishment promised in the Book will overtake them.

d **(38-1)** By the sister nation is meant the nation which resembles it in its deeds.

e **(38-2)** By the *last* and the *first* are meant here the common people and the leaders, because, though the words would bear both interpretations, i.e., the last and the first in time or the last and the first in position, the latter significance is corroborated by similar expressions in several other places; see 2:166, 14:21, 34:31–33, 40:47, etc.

Our Lord, these led us astray, so give them a double punishment of the Fire. He will say: Each one has double but you do not know.[a] **39**And the first of them will say to the last of them: You have no preference over us, so taste the punishment for what you earned.

Section 5: **Those who accept the Message**

40 Those who reject Our messages and turn away from them haughtily, the doors of heaven will not be opened for them, nor will they enter the Garden until the camel pass through the eye of the needle. And thus do We reward the guilty. **41**They shall have a bed of hell and over them coverings (of it). And thus do We recompense the wrongdoers. **42**And as for those who believe and do good — We do not impose on any soul a duty beyond its scope — they are the owners of the Garden; in it they abide. **43**And We shall remove whatever of bitterness is in their hearts — rivers flow beneath them. And they say: All praise is due to Allah, Who guided us to this! And we would not have found the way if Allah had not guided us. Certainly the messengers of our Lord brought the truth. And it will be cried out to them: This is the Garden which you are made to inherit for what you did.

44 And the owners of the Garden call out to the companions of the Fire: We have found what our Lord promised us to be true; have you, too, found what your Lord promised to be true? They will say: Yes. Then a crier will cry out among them: The curse of Allah is on the wrongdoers, **45**who hinder (people) from Allah's way and seek to make it crooked,[b] and they are disbelievers in the Hereafter. **46**And between them is a veil.[c] And on the Elevated Places are men who know all by their marks.[d] And they call out to the owners of

***a* (38-3)** The common people would desire that the leaders should suffer a double torment, for their own sins as well as for having misled others. They are told that if the leaders were guilty of misleading them, they themselves deserved a double punishment for having blindly followed the leaders.

***b* (45)** By seeking to make Allah's way crooked is meant that they suggest doubts regarding the Truth.

***c* (46-1)** The veil which here separates the wicked from the righteous and on account of which the former fail to see the bliss which the latter enjoy will assume a perceptible form in the next life. Thus it is not distance that separates heaven from hell but only a veil, and they hear and even see one another.

***d* (46-2)** The men spoken of here as being on *the Elevated Places* (the title

the Garden: Peace be on you! They have not yet entered it, though they hope.[a] **47**And when their eyes are turned towards the companions of the Fire, they say: Our Lord, do not place us with the unjust people.[b]

Section 6: **Helplessness of opponents**

48 And the owners of the Elevated Places call out to men whom they recognize by their marks, saying: Of no avail were to you your amassings[c] and your arrogance. **49**Are these they about whom you swore that Allah would not bestow mercy on them? Enter the Garden; you have no fear, nor shall you grieve. **50**And the companions of the Fire call out to the owners of the Garden: Pour on us some water or some of what Allah has provided for you. They say: Surely Allah has forbidden them both to the disbelievers, **51**who take their religion for an idle sport and a play, and this world's life deceives them. So this day We shall forsake them, as they neglected the meeting of this day of theirs, and as they denied Our messages.

52 And certainly We have brought them a Book which We make clear with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. **53**Do they wait only for its final sequel?[d] On the day when its final sequel comes, those who neglected it before will say: Indeed the messengers of our Lord brought the truth. Are there any intercessors on our behalf so that they should intercede for us? Or could we be sent back so that we should do (deeds) other than those which we did? Indeed they have lost their souls, and what they forged has failed them.

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of this chapter, *Al-A'rāf*) are the same righteous servants of Allah who are distinctly mentioned in 56:10–11: "And the foremost are the foremost — these are drawn near (to Allah)." Besides this, the prophets are again and again spoken of as a class by themselves, being witnesses over their people.

a **(46-3)** They are, as it were, standing at the door of the Garden, ready to enter it.

b **(47)** Thus do pray those who hope to enter paradise.

c **(48)** The word used may mean either *your amassing worldly wealth*, or it may mean *your multitude* or *strength in numbers*.

d **(53)** By *final sequel* is meant the *ultimate state* of the perfect manifestation of truth by the fulfilment of the prophecies, *the end* or *the ultimate consequence*.

Section 7: **The righteous will prosper**

54 Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods,[a] and He is established on the Throne of Power.[b] He makes the night cover the day, which it pursues incessantly. And (He created) the sun and the moon and the stars, made subservient by His command. Surely His is the creation and the command. Blessed is Allah, the Lord of the worlds![c] **55**Call on your Lord humbly and in secret. Surely He does not love the transgressors. **56**And do not make mischief in the earth after its reformation, and call on Him, fearing and hoping. Surely the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good.[d]

57 And He it is Who sends forth the winds bearing good news before His mercy;[e] till, when they bear a laden cloud, We drive it to a dead land, then We send down water on it, then bring forth

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a **(54-1)** The word *yaum* means not only *day* but also a *period, whatever period it may be*. The six periods of time in which the heavens and the earth are created refer in fact to the six stages in which they have grown to their present condition. In the case of the earth these six stages are detailed in 41:9–10.

b **(54-2)** The true significance of the word *'arsh* is *power* or *control of the creation*. It is not a physical throne for sitting on. The phrase "He is established on the Throne of Power (*'arsh*)" is used in the Quran here and on six other occasions, viz., in 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4 and 57:4. It is invariably used after mentioning the creation of the heavens and the earth and in relation to the Divine control of His creation and the law and order to which the universe is made to submit by its great Author, as shown by the words that follow here, *His is the creation and the command*. The meaning is that after creating the universe, God has not left it to run its course independently of Him, but He it is Whose command holds sway and Who regulates the affairs as He has planned them.

c **(54-3)** In the words *Rabb al-'ālamīn* ("Lord of the worlds") there is also a deeper reference to the spiritual evolution of man which is being worked out under the Divine plan, and the *'arsh* is mentioned specially in this connection, as man's perfection does not consist in the working of the material laws which prevail in the universe but in the spiritual laws which are needed for his perfection. In 40:15 the *Lord of the 'arsh* is clearly stated to be the *Sender of revelation* to man to bring about his spiritual perfection. In 40:7 it is added: "Those who bear the *'arsh* and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask protection for those who believe". The bearers of the *'arsh* or the Throne of Power are, in fact, the bearers of the Divine message.

d **(56)** The feeling which should be entertained towards Allah should be a combination of fear and hope, of awe as well as love, because the fear of His displeasure ennobles the mind no less than the hope of His mercy.

e **(57-1)** His *mercy* represents the rain in the physical world.

thereby fruits of all kinds. Thus do We bring forth the dead that you may be mindful.[a] **58**And the good land — its vegetation comes forth (abundantly) by the permission of its Lord. And that which is inferior — (its vegetation) comes forth but scantily. Thus do We repeat the messages for a people who give thanks.[b]

Section 8: **Noah**

59 Certainly We sent Noah to his people,[c] so he said: My people, serve Allah, you have no god other than Him. Indeed I fear for you the punishment of a grievous day. **60**The chiefs of his people said: Surely we see *y*ou in clear error. **61**He said: My people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. **62** I deliver to you the messages of my Lord, and I offer you good advice, and I know from Allah what you do not know. **63**Do you wonder that a reminder has come to you from your Lord through a man from among you, that he may warn you and that you may guard against evil, and that mercy may be shown to you?

64 But they called him a liar, so We delivered him and those with him in the ark, and We drowned those who rejected Our messages. Surely they were a blind people![d]

***a* (57-2)** The bringing forth of the spiritually dead to life through the revelation of the Quran is always likened to the bringing of the dead earth to life by rain. The wind bearing the good news was the movement towards Islam, which was daily becoming more and more powerful.

***b* (58)** Revelation is here likened to the rain, and the good or bad nature of man to good or inferior land. If some people do not benefit by the revelation, it is just as some lands do not benefit by rain.

***c* (59)** Having warned the opponents of the evil consequences of their opposition to the Holy Prophet, several illustrations are now given from sacred history, showing how those people were dealt with who refused to listen to the voice of the warners. The object is not to narrate history as such, but to bring out common characteristics of the histories of different nations, to mention incidents which contain prophetical allusion to the Holy Prophet's life and to illustrate the general warnings made regarding the ultimate consequences of the rejection of Truth. The Quran relates the broad facts that every prophet preached Divine Unity, every prophet laid stress on the doing of good, every prophet was received with severe opposition, and that every prophet ultimately succeeded in establishing the truth.

***d* (64)** See further 11:37–48 and 23:27–29. The Quran does not support the idea of a world deluge, for it states here that Noah was sent only to *his* people, not to all nations. Only the people to whom Noah was sent called him a liar, and only those were drowned who rejected the message of Allah delivered through Noah.

Section 9: **Hūd**

65 And to Ād (We sent) their brother Hūd.[a] He said: My people, serve Allah, you have no god other than Him. Will you not then guard against evil? **66**The chiefs of those who disbelieved from among his people said: Certainly we see *y*ou in folly, and we certainly think *y*ou to be a liar. **67**He said: My people, there is no folly in me, but I am a messenger of the Lord of the worlds. **68** I deliver to you the messages of my Lord and I am a faithful adviser to you. **69**Do you wonder that a reminder has come to you from your Lord through a man from among you that he may warn you? And remember when He made you successors after Noah's people and increased you in excellence of make.[b] So remember the bounties of Allah, that you may be successful. **70**They said: Have *y*ou come to us that we may serve Allah alone, and give up what our fathers used to serve? Then bring us what *y*ou threaten us with, if *y*ou are truthful. **71**He said: Indeed uncleanness and wrath from your Lord have come upon you. Do you dispute with me about names which you and your fathers have named?[c] Allah has not sent any authority for them. So wait; I too am waiting along with you.

72 So We delivered him and those with him by mercy from Us, and We cut off the roots of those who rejected Our messages and were not believers.[d]

Section 10: **Sālih and Lot**

73 And to Thamūd (We sent) their brother Sālih.[e] He said: My

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***a* (65)** Ād was the grandson of Aram (mentioned in 89:7), who was a grandson of Noah, and the tribe of Ād spoken of here is called the first Ād (53:50), as distinguished from the tribe of Thamūd, which is called the second Ād. This tribe lived in the desert of *al-Aḥqāf* (46:21) which is marked on the maps of Arabia and extends from Oman to Hadramaut.

The male member of a tribe is generally spoken of as their brother, as here Hūd is called. The prophet Hūd is the Eber of the Bible, because Hūd is said to be the grandson of Arphaxad, the grandson of Noah. Compare Genesis 10:24 for Eber's genealogy.

***b* (69)** By making them *khulafā'* or *successors* is meant that they were made a ruling nation and possessors of a vast kingdom.

***c* (71)** The reference here is to their deities.

***d* (72)** They were destroyed by a storm (69:7).

***e* (73-1)** Ād and Thamūd, though two nearly related tribes, were separated

people, serve Allah, you have no god other than Him. Clear proof has indeed come to you from your Lord. This is Allah's she-camel — a sign for you — so leave her alone to pasture in Allah's earth, and do her no harm or a painful punishment will afflict you.[a] **74**And remember when He made you successors after Ād and settled you in the land — you make mansions on its plains and carve out houses in the mountains. So remember Allah's bounties and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief. **75**The arrogant chiefs of his people said to those who were weak, to those who believed from among them: Do you know that Sālih is one sent by his Lord? They said: Surely we are believers in that with which he has been sent. **76**Those who were arrogant said: Surely we are disbelievers in what you believe.

77 Then they hamstrung the she-camel and revolted against their Lord's commandment, and said: Sālih, bring us what *y*ou threaten us with, if *y*ou are one of the messengers. **78**So the earthquake seized them, and they were motionless bodies in their abodes. **79**So he turned away from them and said: My people, indeed I delivered to you the message of my Lord and gave you good advice, but you do not love good advisers.[b]

80 And (We sent) Lot,[c] when he said to his people: Do you commit foul deeds which no one in the world did before you? **81**Surely you come to males with lust instead of females. Indeed, you are a people exceeding bounds. **82**And the answer of his people was only that they said: Turn them out of your town; surely they are a people who aspire to purity! **83**So We delivered him and his

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both as regards time and place. Thamūd is known after a grandson of Aram, the grandson of Noah. Historical traces of it are met with in Ptolemy. The tribe flourished more than two hundred years after Ād, and occupied the territory known as *al-Ḥijr* (15:80), and the plain known by the name of Wādi-l-Qurā, which forms the southern boundary of Syria and the northern one of Arabia. Sālih was a descendant in the sixth generation after Thamūd.

***a* (73-2)** It is called *Allah's she-camel* because it was given as a sign from Allah. It was an ordinary she-camel, which was given as a sign to a people. Their slaying of it was a sign that they would neither accept the truth, nor cease persecuting Sālih and his followers.

***b* (79)** This evidently refers to the survivors from the great disaster.

***c* (80)** Lot is one of those prophets who have been maligned in the Bible. He was considered a righteous servant by Abraham (Genesis, 18:23), but a little further on in the same book we are told that Lot was guilty of incestuous intercourse with his daughters. The record there has evidently been manipulated.

followers, except his wife — she was among those who remained behind. **84**And We rained upon them a rain.[a] See, then, what was the end of the guilty!

Section 11: **Shuaib**

85 And to Midian (We sent) their brother Shuaib.[b] He said: My people, serve Allah, you have no god other than Him. Clear proof indeed has come to you from your Lord, so give full measure and weight and do not diminish to people their things,[c] nor make mischief in the land after its reform. This is better for you, if you are believers. **86**Nor lie in wait on every road, threatening and turning away from Allah's way him who believes in Him and seeking to make it crooked. And remember when you were few, then He multiplied you, and see what was the end of the mischief-makers! **87**And if there are some of you who believe in what I am sent with, and others who do not believe, then wait patiently till Allah judges between us; and He is the Best of judges.

Part 9

88 The arrogant chiefs of his people said: We will certainly turn *y*ou out, Shuaib, and those who believe with *y*ou from our town, or you shall come back to our religion. He said: Even though we dislike (it)? **89**Indeed we should have forged a lie against Allah, if we go back to your religion after Allah has delivered us from it. And it is not for us to go back to it, unless Allah our Lord please. Our Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge. In Allah do we trust. Our Lord, decide between us and our people with truth, and You are the Best of deciders. **90**And the chiefs of his people, who disbelieved, said: If you follow Shuaib, you are surely losers.

91 So the earthquake overtook them, and they were motionless bodies in their homes. **92**Those who called Shuaib a liar were as though they had never dwelt there. Those who called Shuaib a liar, they were the losers. **93**So he turned away from them and said: My people, indeed I delivered to you the messages of my Lord and I gave

***a* (84)** The punishment which overtook the people of Lot is frequently called *rain*, while in 11:82 and 15:74 stones are said to have been rained down upon them. See also 54:34. It was a volcanic eruption combined with an earthquake.

***b* (85-1)** Shuaib was a descendant of Abraham in the fifth generation. It is generally supposed to be another name for Jethro of the Bible (Exodus, 3:1).

***c* (85-2)** The injunction *do not diminish to people their things* stands for not depriving or defrauding people of their rights.

you good advice; how, then, should I be sorry for a disbelieving people?

Section 12: **Makkans warned of punishment**

94 And We did not send a prophet to a town but We seized its people with distress and affliction that they might humble themselves.[a] **95**Then We changed the evil for good, till they became affluent and said: Distress and happiness did indeed touch our fathers. So We took them by surprise while they did not perceive. **96**And if the people of the towns had believed and kept their duty, We would certainly have opened for them blessings from the heavens and the earth. But they rejected, so We seized them for what they earned. **97**Are the people of the towns, then, secure from Our punishment coming to them by night while they sleep? **98**Or, are the people of the towns secure from Our punishment coming to them in the morning while they play?[b] **99**Are they secure from Allah's plan? But none feels secure from Allah's plan except the people who perish.

Section 13: **Moses sent to Pharaoh with signs**

100 Is it not clear to those who inherit the earth after its (former) residents that, if We please, We would afflict them for their sins, and seal their hearts so they would not hear? **101**Such were the towns some of whose news We have related to *y*ou. And certainly their messengers came to them with clear arguments, but they would not believe what they had rejected before. Thus does Allah seal the hearts of the disbelievers. **102**And We did not find in most of them (faithfulness to) covenant; and We found most of them to be transgressors.

103 Then, after them, We sent Moses[c] with Our messages to

***a* (94)** That the histories of the nations are meant as a warning to all opponents of truth is evident. It is also plain that even afflictions and distress sent on a people are meant for their spiritual betterment, *that they might humble themselves*.

***b* (98)** The *playing* may be taken either literally or it may indicate the worldly engagements in which they were occupied to the utter neglect of higher aspirations.

***c* (103)** The history of Moses is here taken up in detail. The Holy Prophet

Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they disbelieved them. See, then, what was the end of the mischief-makers! **104**And Moses said: O Pharaoh, surely I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds, **105**worthy of not saying anything about Allah except the truth. I have come to you indeed with clear proof from your Lord, so let the Children of Israel go with me. **106**He said: If *y*ou have come with a sign, produce it, if *y*ou are truthful. **107**So he threw down his staff, then — lo! — it was an obvious snake. **108**And he drew forth his hand, and — lo! — it was white to the onlookers.[a]

Section 14: **Pharaoh summons enchanters**

109 The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said: Surely this is a skilful enchanter! **110**He intends to turn you out of your land. (Pharaoh said:) What do you advise? **111**They said: Put him off and his brother, and send heralds into the cities, **112**to bring to *y*ou every skilful enchanter.

113 And the enchanters came to Pharaoh, saying: We must surely have a reward if we prevail. **114**He said: Yes, and you shall certainly be among those who are near (to me).

115 They said: Moses, will *y*ou throw, or shall we (be the first to) throw? **116**He said: You throw. So when they threw, they deceived the people's eyes and overawed them, and they produced a mighty enchantment. **117**And We revealed to Moses: Throw down *y*our staff. Then — lo! — it swallowed up their lies. **118**So the truth

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Muhammad had more in common with Moses than with any other prophet, and he is called the like of Moses in the Mosaic prophecies.

a **(108)** It is nowhere stated that whenever Moses threw down his rod it turned into a snake. Only on two occasions the rod is stated to have turned into a snake: (1) when Moses held communion with God before going to Pharaoh; (2) when he first came before Pharaoh, or when Pharaoh summoned the enchanters to his help. On the first of these occasions the rod was seen turning into a snake by Moses alone, when he was in a state of vision — the state in which a prophet is temporarily transported to a spiritual sphere. On the latter occasion others besides Moses witnessed the change, but it is a fact that the effect of inspired vision is sometimes so strong that others besides the seer partake in it.

Whatever their real nature, these miracles of Moses were not mere play. The great truth underlying the rod or staff turning into a snake was that the followers of Moses, as represented by his rod, would prevail over their enemies; and the significance underlying the whitening of Moses' hand was that his arguments would shine forth with clearness.

was established, and what they did became null. [119]There they were defeated, and they went back humiliated.

120 And the enchanters fell down prostrate — [121]they said: We believe in the Lord of the worlds, [122]the Lord of Moses and Aaron. [123]Pharaoh said: You believe in Him before I give you permission! Surely this is a plot which you have plotted in the city, to turn out of it its people, but you shall know! [124] I shall certainly cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, then I shall crucify you all together! [125]They said: Surely to our Lord do we return. [126]And *y*ou take revenge on us only because we believed in the messages of our Lord when they came to us. Our Lord, pour out on us patience and cause us to die in submission (to You)! [a]

Section 15: **Persecution of Israelites continues**

127 And the chiefs of Pharaoh's people said: Will *y*ou leave Moses and his people to make mischief in the land and forsake *y*ou and *y*our gods? He said: We will kill their sons and spare their women, and surely we are dominant over them. [128]Moses said to his people: Ask help from Allah and be patient. Surely the land is Allah's — He gives it for an inheritance to such of His servants as He pleases. And the end is for those who keep their duty. [129]They said: We were persecuted before *y*ou came to us and since *y*ou have come to us. He said: It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you rulers in the land, then He will see how you act.[b]

Section 16: **Moses shows more signs**

130 And certainly We overtook Pharaoh's people with droughts and shortage of fruits that they might be mindful. [131]But when

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a **(126)** The Bible does not speak of the magicians as believing in the Divine mission of Moses when they were vanquished, but according to Rabbinical literature, some Egyptians accompanied Moses when he departed from Egypt. It should be noted that the magicians could not have believed unless they had heard the arguments of Moses as to the existence of God and as to a life after death in which they now believed so staunchly that they were ready to sacrifice their very lives for their faith. It shows that Moses had explained the essential religious truths to the whole gathering before he showed the signs.

b **(129)** By *the land* is meant the *Promised Land*, for it was there that Moses was taking them. Their being made rulers in the land was conditional upon their doing good; this is suggested in the concluding words of the verse.

good befell them they said: This is due to us. And when evil afflicted them, they attributed it to the ill-luck of Moses and those with him. Surely their evil fortune is only from Allah, but most of them do not know.[a] **132**And they said: Whatever sign *y*ou may bring us to charm us with it — we shall not believe in *y*ou. **133**So We sent upon them widespread death, and the locusts and the lice and the frogs and the blood — clear signs. But they behaved haughtily and they were a guilty people.

134 And when the plague fell upon them, they said: Moses, pray for us to *y*our Lord as He has made promise with *y*ou. If *y*ou remove the plague from us, we will certainly believe in *y*ou and will let the Children of Israel go with *y*ou. **135**But when We removed the plague from them till a term which they should attain — lo! — they broke (their promise).[b] **136**So We exacted retribution from them and drowned them in the sea, because they rejected Our signs and were heedless of them. **137**And We made the people who were considered weak to inherit the eastern lands and the western ones which We had blessed. And the good word of *y*our Lord was fulfilled in the Children of Israel — because of their patience.[c] And We destroyed what Pharaoh and his people had produced and what they had built.

138 And We took the Children of Israel across the sea. Then they came to a people who were devoted to their idols. They said: Moses, make for us a god as they have gods.[d] He said: Surely you are an ignorant people! **139**(As to) these, what they are engaged in shall be destroyed and what they do is futile. **140**He said: Shall I seek for you a god other than Allah, while He has made you excel (all)

***a* (131)** *Their evil fortune is from Allah* means that the misfortunes which they were made to suffer were brought about by Allah as a result of their own evil deeds.

***b* (135)** A reference to Exodus, ch. 8–11, will show that Pharaoh again and again broke his promise to let the Children of Israel go — promises which he made on condition that a certain affliction should be removed.

***c* (137)** The land that was *blessed* is none other than the Holy Land, for which a Divine promise was given to Abraham. The *good word* referred to here is that contained in Genesis 17:8. The eastern and the western lands might signify the eastern and the western tracts of the Holy Land, or the lands on the eastern and western sides of the Jordan.

***d* (138)** The Israelites undoubtedly came across idolatrous nations in their wanderings. They themselves had idolatrous leanings: "…the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, Come, make us gods that shall go before us" (Exodus, 32:1). Many other anecdotes show a similar tendency to idol-worship.

created things?[a] **141**And when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people, who subjected you to severe torment, killing your sons and sparing your women, and in it there was a great trial from your Lord.

Section 17: **Moses receives the Law**

142 And We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed them with ten, so the appointed time of his Lord was complete forty nights. And Moses said to his brother Aaron: Take my place among my people, and act well and do not follow the way of the mischief-makers. **143**And when Moses came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said: My Lord, show me (Yourself) so that I may look at You. He said: *Y*ou cannot see Me, but look at the mountain; if it remains firm in its place, then will *y*ou see Me. So when his Lord manifested His glory to the mountain, He made it crumble and Moses fell down fainting.[b] Then when he recovered, he said: Glory be to You! I turn to You, and I am the first of the believers. **144**He said: O Moses, surely I have chosen *y*ou above the people by My messages and My words. So take hold of what I give *y*ou and be of the grateful ones.

145 And We ordained for him in the tablets admonition of every kind and clear explanation of all things.[c] So take hold of these (teachings) with firmness and command *y*our people to take hold of the best of these. I shall show you the abode of the transgressors.[d]

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a **(140)** Moses' argument against idolatry is the one to which the Quran repeatedly calls attention, namely, that man, being as it were the lord of creation under God, and excelling the whole of creation, should not take objects lower than himself as his gods.

b **(143)** The words *You cannot see Me* negative the seeing of the Divine Being with the *physical* eye. Moses' request seems to have been based on the elders' demand spoken of in 2:55. I venture, however, another explanation. What Moses wanted to see was the great manifestation of Divine glory which was reserved for the Holy Prophet Muhammad. In fact, both Moses and Jesus were not equal to the task which was reserved for the Prophet Muhammad. Jesus said that he could not teach his followers all things, but that when the Comforter made his appearance he would guide them into all truth. That Moses was unequal to the Holy Prophet's task was clearly demonstrated by his falling down in a swoon when he beheld the Great Manifestation.

c **(145-1)** The words *admonition of every kind* and *explanation of all things* cannot be taken generally, but are limited by the requirements of the time in which Moses appeared.

d **(145-2)** The meaning is that a time will come to the Israelites when they will become transgressors, i.e., they will not keep the Divine commandments.

146 I shall turn away from My messages those who are unjustly proud in the earth. And if they see every sign, they will not believe in it; and if they see the way of rectitude, they do not take it for a way; and if they see the way of error, they take it for a way. This is because they reject Our messages and are heedless of them. **147** And those who reject Our messages and the meeting of the Hereafter — their deeds are fruitless. Can they be rewarded except for what they do?

Section 18: **Israelites worship a calf**

148 And Moses' people made of their ornaments a calf after him — a (lifeless) body, having a lowing sound.[a] Could they not see that it did not speak to them, nor guided them in the way? They took it (for worship) and they were unjust. **149** And when they repented and saw that they had gone astray, they said: If our Lord have not mercy on us and forgive us, we shall certainly be losers.[b]

150 And when Moses returned to his people, angry, grieved, he said: Evil is what you have done after me! Did you hasten on the judgment of your Lord? And he threw down the tablets and seized his brother by the head, dragging him towards him. (Aaron) said: Son of my mother, the people reckoned me weak and had almost killed me. So do not make the enemies to rejoice over me and do not count me among the unjust people. **151** (Moses) said: My Lord, forgive me and my brother, and admit us to Your mercy, and You are the most Merciful of those who show mercy.[c]

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a **(148)** The word *jasad* means *a body*, as well as *red* or *intensely yellow*. The former meaning indicates that the calf was a mere lifeless body, yet it was so made that it gave a lowing sound like that of a calf. The other meaning also provides a true description of the calf as it was made of gold ornaments.

b **(149)** The Israelites' repentance, though mentioned first, was subsequent to Moses' return (2:54). The order here connects the repentance with the sin.

c **(151)** Aaron's excuse and Moses' acceptance of it show clearly that Aaron was quite innocent, having had a share neither in making the calf nor in worshipping it. The Bible account, which makes a righteous prophet of God guilty of the most heinous crime, must be rejected as untrue. That forgiveness was not sought for any fault in connection with calf-worship is clear from the fact that Moses joins himself with Aaron in the prayer given in this verse. Forgiveness here, as frequently elsewhere in the Quran, is equivalent to the Divine protection which everyone should seek against the shortcomings of human nature.

Section 19: **The Torah and the Prophet's advent**

152 Those who took the calf (for a god) — wrath from their Lord, and disgrace in this world's life, will surely come upon them. And thus do We recompense those who invent lies. **153**And those who do evil deeds, then repent after that and believe — *y*our Lord after that is surely Forgiving, Merciful. **154**And when Moses' anger calmed down, he took up the tablets; and in the writing thereof was guidance and mercy for those who fear their Lord.

155 And Moses chose of his people seventy men for Our appointment.[a] So when the earthquake struck them, he said: My Lord, if You had pleased, You would have destroyed them before and myself (too). Will You destroy us for what the foolish among us have done? It is only Your trial. You cause to perish by it whom You please and guide whom You please. You are our Protector, so forgive us and have mercy on us, and You are the Best of those who forgive. **156**And ordain for us good in this world's life and in the Hereafter, for surely we turn to You. He said: I afflict with My punishment whom I please, and My mercy encompasses all things.[b] So I ordain it for those who keep their duty and give the due charity, and those who believe in Our messages — **157**those who follow the Messenger-Prophet, the *Ummī,*[c] whom they find mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel.[d] He enjoins them good and forbids them evil,

***a* (155)** Exodus 24:1 speaks of Moses having taken up seventy elders of Israel along with him, though they were forbidden to "come near the Lord", and on this occasion Moses was in the mountain forty days and forty nights (Exodus, 24:18). Although the Bible also speaks of Moses as going to the mountain for forty days and forty nights after the incident of the calf-worship (Exodus, 34:28), the Quran refers only to the first occasion.

***b* (156)** No attribute of God receives such prominence in the Quran as the attribute of *mercy — My mercy encompasses all things*. Even punishment is a phase of Divine mercy because it seeks to correct the evil-doers.

***c* (157-1)** *Ummī* means *one who neither writes nor reads a writing*. Hence the Arabs are called an *ummī* people, and the *Ummī* Prophet is either *the prophet of the ummī people* (i.e., the Arabs) because he was like them, or he was so called because he himself did not know reading and writing. But according to some, the prophet is called *Ummī* because he came from the *Umm al-Qurā*, i.e., Makkah, which is the Metropolis of Arabia.

***d* (157-2)** There are many prophecies regarding the advent of the Holy Prophet in the Bible. The Torah and the Gospel are specially mentioned here because Moses and Jesus were respectively the first and the last of the Israelite prophets.

and makes lawful to them the good things and prohibits for them impure things, and removes from them their burden and the shackles which were on them. So those who believe in him and honour him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him — these are the successful.

Section 20: **Divine favours on Israelites**

158 Say: O mankind, surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, of Him Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth.[a] There is no god but He; He gives life and causes death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the *Ummī* Prophet who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided aright.

159 And of Moses' people is a party who guide with truth, and with it they do justice.[b] **160** And We divided them into twelve tribes, as nations. And We revealed to Moses when his people asked him for water: March on to the rock with *y*our staff; so out flowed from it twelve springs. Each tribe knew its drinking-place. And We made the clouds to give shade over them and We sent to them manna and quails. Eat of the good things We have given you. And they did not do Us any harm, but they wronged their own souls.

161 And when it was said to them: Dwell in this town and eat from it wherever you wish, and make petition for forgiveness, and

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Deuteronomy 18:15–18 speaks very clearly of the raising of a prophet, who shall be the like of Moses, from among the brethren of the Israelites, i.e., the Ishmaelites or the Arabs, while Deuteronomy 33:2 speaks of the shining forth of the manifestation of the Lord, i.e., his coming in full glory "from Mount Paran". The Gospel is full of prophecies of the advent of the Holy Prophet; Matthew 21:33–44, Mark 12:1–11, Luke 20:9–18, where the Lord of the vineyard comes after the son (i.e., Jesus) is maltreated, and Matthew 13:31–32, John 1:21, John 14:16, John 14:26 all contain such prophecies.

***a* (158)** As against the various prophets spoken of in this chapter, every one of whom was sent to *his people*, the Prophet Muhammad is here spoken of as having been sent to *all people*, to the whole of mankind. Thus the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad was a turning point in the history of humanity. The day of the national prophet was over and a new era had dawned in which the whole of humanity was ultimately to be united under one spiritual head. The idea of *nationality* had to give place to the broader idea of *one humanity*, and the basis of it was laid by the Quran.

***b* (159)** Thus the Quran recognizes that there were good people among the Jews. See also v. 168.

enter the gate submissively, We shall forgive you your wrongs. We shall give more to the doers of good. **162**But those who were unjust among them changed it for a word other than that which they were told, so We sent upon them a pestilence from heaven for their wrongdoing.[a]

Section 21: **Israelites' transgressions**

163 And ask them about the town which stood by the sea. When they violated the Sabbath, when their fish came to them on their Sabbath day on the surface, and when it was not their Sabbath they did not come to them. Thus did We try them because they transgressed.[b] **164**And when some of them said: Why do you preach to a people whom Allah would destroy or whom He would punish with a severe punishment? They said: To be free from blame before your Lord, and that perhaps they may guard against evil. **165**So when they neglected what they had been reminded of, We delivered those who forbade evil and We overtook those who were wrongdoers with an evil punishment because they transgressed.

166 So when they revoltingly persisted in what they had been forbidden, We said to them: Be (as) apes, despised and hated. **167**And when *y*our Lord declared that He would send against them to the day of Resurrection those who would subject them to severe torment. Surely *y*our Lord is Quick in retribution; and surely He is Forgiving, Merciful. **168**And We divided them in the earth into (different) groups — some of them are righteous and some of them are otherwise. And We tried them with blessings and misfortunes that they might turn.

169 Then after them came an evil generation who inherited the Book, taking the frail goods of this low life and saying: It will be forgiven us. And if (more) such good came to them, they would take it (too).[c] Was not a promise taken from them in the Book that

***a* (162)** For the statements made in v. 160–162, see 2:57–60 and footnotes.

***b* (163)** The city referred to here is generally recognized as being Ela, which was situated on the Red Sea. The incident alluded to is mentioned as an instance of the Jewish violation of the Sabbath. The fish appeared on the surface of the water on the Sabbath because they had a sense of security on that day. This was a temptation for the people to break the law.

***c* (169)** First they commit a crime for the frail goods of this life, saying that

they would not speak anything about Allah but the truth? And they study what is in it. And the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who keep their duty. Do you not then understand? **170**And as for those who hold fast by the Book and keep up prayer — surely We do not waste the reward of the reformers. **171**And when We shook the mountain over them as if it were a covering, and they thought that it was going to fall down upon them: Hold on firmly what We have given you, and bear in mind what is in it, so that you may guard against evil.[a]

Section 22: **Evidence of Divine impress on man's nature**

172 And when *y*our Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants, and made them bear witness about themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes, we bear witness.[b] In case you should say on the day of Resurrection: We were unaware of this, **173**or you should say: Only our fathers set up partners (with Allah) before (us), and we were (their) descendants after them. Will You destroy us for what liars did? **174**And thus do We make the messages clear, and that perhaps they may return.

175 And recite to them the news of him to whom We give Our messages, but he withdraws himself from them, so the devil follows him up, and he is of those who perish.[c] **176**And if We had pleased, We would have exalted him thereby; but he clings to the earth and

they will be forgiven; then persist in their evil course and when a similar occasion arises, they again return to the old crimes. There is no repentance.

***a* (171)** The stories built upon these simple words by some commentators must be rejected. The words simply relate the experience of the elders of Israel when they stood at the foot of the mountain, which rose above them. There was a severe earthquake, which is referred to in v. 155, causing them to think that the mountain would fall down upon them.

***b* (172)** The verse does not mention the bringing forth of descendants from Adam, but from the children of Adam, and this seems clearly to refer to every human being as he comes into existence. The evidence is, therefore, given by human nature itself. It is, in fact, the same evidence which is elsewhere spoken of as being afforded by human nature as in "the nature made by Allah in which He has created mankind" (30:30).

***c* (175)** This verse speaks generally of everyone to whom guidance is brought but he turns aside from it. This view is corroborated by what is stated at the conclusion of the parable in v. 176, *such is the parable of the people who reject Our messages.*

follows his low desire.[a] His parable is as the parable of the dog — if *y*ou drive him away, he lolls out his tongue, and if *y*ou leave him alone, he lolls out his tongue. Such is the parable of the people who reject Our messages. So relate the narrative that they may reflect. **177**Evil is the likeness of the people who reject Our messages and wrong their own souls. **178**He whom Allah guides is on the right way; and he whom He leaves in error — they are the losers.

179 And certainly We have created for hell many of the jinn and the people — they have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear.[b] They are as cattle; rather, they are more astray. These are the heedless ones. **180**And Allah's are the best names, so call on Him thereby [c] and leave alone those who violate the sanctity of His names.[d] They will be recompensed for what they do. **181**And of those whom We have created is a community who guide with the truth and with it they do justice.

Section 23: **The coming of the Doom**

182 And those who reject Our messages — We lead them (to destruction) step by step from where they do not know. **183**And I grant them respite. Surely My scheme is effective.[e] **184**Do they not reflect (that) there is no madness in their companion? He is only a plain warner. **185**Do they not consider the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what things Allah has created, and that it may be that their doom has drawn near? In what announcement after this will they then believe? **186**Whomsoever Allah leaves in error, there

a **(176)** *Earth* here stands for all that is earthly, for things material. The people spoken of here are those who do not care for the higher values of life.

b **(179)** Many people and jinn are created for hell, but they are none other than the heedless ones who do not care for what is said. Allah has not created them differently from others, but they themselves do not use the faculties which Allah has granted them.

c **(180-1)** By *the best names* are meant *names expressing the most excellent attributes of the Divine Being*. By *calling on Him thereby* is meant that man should always keep the Divine attributes before his mind, endeavouring to possess those attributes.

d **(180-2)** Violation of the sanctity of His names is of two kinds: firstly, giving Him an improper or inaccurate attribute; and secondly, to interpret His attributes in a manner which does not befit Him.

e **(183)** The word *kaid* (scheme), in relation to God, indicates *skill in the management or ordering of affairs.*

is no guide for him. And He leaves them alone in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on.

187 They ask *y*ou about the Hour,[a] when will it take place? Say: Its knowledge is with my Lord only. None but He will manifest it at its time. It is momentous in the heavens and the earth. It will not come to you but suddenly. They ask *y*ou as if *y*ou could find out about it (by effort). Say: Its knowledge is with Allah only, but most people do not know. **188**Say: I do not control benefit nor harm for myself except as Allah please. And if I had known the unseen, I should have much of good, and no evil would touch me. I am but a warner and the giver of good news to a people who believe.[b]

Section 24: **The final word**

189 He it is Who created you from a single soul, and of the same did He make his mate, that he might find comfort in her. So when he covers her she bears a light burden, then moves about with it. Then when it grows heavy, they both call upon Allah, their Lord: If You give us a good one, we shall certainly be grateful. **190**But when He gives them a good one, they set up with Him partners in what He has given them.[c] Supremely exalted is Allah above what they set up as partners (with Him). **191**Do they set up (with Him) that which has not created anything, while they are themselves created? **192**And they cannot give them help, nor can they help themselves.

193 And if you invite them to guidance, they will not follow you. It is the same to you whether you invite them or you are silent.[d] **194**Those whom you call on besides Allah are slaves like your-

***a* (187)** That is, the Hour with which they are threatened as being the hour of their doom. The word *sa'ah* or the *hour* is used in the Quran to indicate both the doom of the guilty in this life and the time when a perfect manifestation of rewards and punishments will take place in the Hereafter.

***b* (188)** The simplicity and nobility of this statement as indicating the mission of a prophet is unsurpassed. He gives glad news of triumph to those who believe, warns the evil-doers of the evil consequences of their deeds in this life as well as in the next, but he does not claim the possession of Divine powers.

***c* (190)** This describes the condition of man in general and refers to the evidence of his nature, for when in distress he always turns to Allah, but when in ease he goes after other gods or his own low desires.

***d* (193)** Invitation to Truth must be extended to all, though some may not benefit by it. The meaning is further clarified in verses 198–199.

selves; so call on them, then let them answer you, if you are truthful. **195**Do they have feet with which they walk, or do they have hands with which they hold, or do they have eyes with which they see, or do they have ears with which they hear? Say: Call upon your associate-gods then plot against me and give me no respite. **196**Surely my Friend is Allah, Who revealed the Book, and He befriends the righteous. **197**And those whom you call upon besides Him are not able to help you, nor can they help themselves.

198 And if you invite them to guidance, they do not hear; and *y*ou see them looking towards *y*ou, yet they do not see. **199**Take to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn away from the ignorant. **200**And if a false imputation from the devil afflict *y*ou,[a] seek refuge in Allah. Surely He is Hearing, Knowing. **201**Those who guard against evil, when a visitation from the devil afflicts them, they become mindful, then — lo! — they see.[b] **202**And their brethren[c] increase them in error, then they do not cease.

203 And when *y*ou do not bring them a sign, they say: Why do *y*ou not demand it? Say: I follow only what is revealed to me from my Lord. These are clear proofs from your Lord and a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. **204**And when the Quran is recited, listen to it and remain silent, that mercy may be shown to you. **205**And remember *y*our Lord within *y*ourself humbly and fearing, and in a voice not loud, in the morning and the evening, and do not be one of the heedless. **206**Surely those who are with *y*our Lord are not too proud to serve Him, and they glorify Him and prostrate themselves before Him.

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a **(200)** The devil in this case, as frequently in the Quran, stands for the devilish enemies who spread all kinds of false reports concerning the Holy Prophet, against which he is told to seek refuge in Allah.

b **(201)** The *visitation of the devil* means *the happening of any grievous incident* or *the coming of an affliction* from the hands of the devil, or the wicked acting in opposition to the righteous. Being endowed with insight, they see their way out of the affliction. The devil's visitation may also signify anger which blinds a man, and those who guard against evil are not blinded by it.

c **(202)** That is, the brethren of the devils, or the devil's human associates.

Chapter 8

Al-Anfāl Voluntary Gifts

This chapter deals with the Battle of Badr, the first battle which the Muslims had to fight, and it goes under the name of *Anfāl,* literally *voluntary gifts*, because the Muslim State had at the time no treasury, nor any arsenal, nor an army and voluntary gifts were therefore called for. It was not only this battle but all the succeeding battles which Muslims had to fight were carried on only by voluntary gifts. Success in this battle, against all odds, provided proof of the truth of the Holy Prophet's mission and thus this chapter occurs after a discussion of prophethood in the last chapter. Most of this chapter was revealed in 2 A.H., while the concluding verses of sections 7 and 8 were revealed around the time of the conquest of Makkah in 8 A.H.

Section 1: **The Battle of Badr — Muslims go forth**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 They ask *y*ou about voluntary gifts. Say: Voluntary gifts are for Allah and the Messenger.[a] So keep your duty to Allah and set aright your differences, and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers. **2**They only are believers whose hearts are full of fear when Allah is mentioned, and when His messages are recited to them they increase them in faith, and in their Lord do they trust, **3** those who keep up prayer and spend (on good works) out of what We have given them. **4**These are the believers truly. For them are with their Lord exalted grades and protection and an honourable sustenance.

5 Even as *y*our Lord caused *y*ou to go forth from *y*our house with truth, though some of the believers were surely averse,[b]

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a **(1)** There is much difference of opinion among the commentators as to what is meant by *anfāl* here. The most generally received opinion is that it means property acquired during the war. I take the word *anfāl* as carrying here its literal significance of *voluntary gifts* for the advancement of the cause of Islam, such voluntary gifts being most needed at a time when the very life of Islam was threatened. Indeed there is no better justification for a war than that it is carried on by the voluntary gifts of those whose life is in danger. It is the only war that is really carried on by the people in self-defence.

b **(5)** The circumstances of the Battle of Badr have been misunderstood. It is

6disputing with *y*ou about the truth after it had become clear — as if they were being driven to death while they saw (it). 7And when Allah promised you one of the two parties that it should be yours, and you loved that the one not armed should be yours,[a] and Allah desired to establish the Truth by His words,[b] and to cut off the root of the disbelievers — 8that He might cause the Truth to triumph and bring falsehood to failure, though the guilty disliked.

9 When you sought the aid of your Lord, so He answered you: I will assist you with a thousand of the angels following one another. 10And Allah gave it only as good news, and that your hearts might be at ease by it.[c] And victory is only from Allah; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise.

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alleged that the Holy Prophet had made preparations for attacking an unarmed caravan of the Quraish on its way back from Syria to Makkah, when Abu Sufyan, the caravan leader, sent word to Makkah and obtained an escort of nearly a thousand men. If the Holy Prophet had desired to plunder the caravan when it approached Madinah, he would have done so long before Abu Sufyan could obtain assistance from Makkah, as Madinah was thirteen days' journey from Makkah. Badr lies at a distance of three days' journey from Madinah. The enemy had marched forth for ten days and the Muslims only for three days when the two forces encountered each other at Badr, which shows clearly that the Muslims had turned out to take the defensive against an invading force. It is clearly stated here that some of the believers were averse to fighting. They could not have been averse if they had to encounter only an unarmed caravan. It is said in the next verse that *they went forth as if they were being driven to death.* They knew that they were going to meet an enemy treble in numbers and much more powerful and efficient.

a **(7-1)** The two parties referred to were the unarmed caravan of the Quraish going to Makkah and the armed force of the Quraish that was on its way to Madinah. Naturally, some of the Muslims desired that their encounter should take place with the unarmed Quraish caravan.

b **(7-2)** By *His words* is meant here *the fulfilment of His words*, because the Holy Prophet had declared at Makkah long before that an encounter would take place between the Muslims and the Quraish, in which the former would be victorious. The Holy Prophet himself repeated one of these prophecies aloud in the field when he prayed on the day of Badr: "Soon shall the armies be routed, and they will show their backs" (54:45).

c **(10)** See 3:124 footnote. It is nowhere stated in the Quran that the angels actually fought, but here, as in 3:126, we are told that the angels were sent down to bear good news of victory and to ease the hearts of the Muslims. Here, however, we are further told that, as a result of the coming of the angels, calm fell upon the Muslims, their hearts being strengthened and their footsteps being steadied (v. 11), and that while the believers were thus made firm, terror was cast into the hearts of the disbelievers (v. 12). Hence it is that the number of angels corresponds with the strength of the enemy force in each case.

Section 2: **The Battle of Badr — Fighting**

11 When He made slumber fall on you as a security from Him, and sent down upon you water from the clouds that He might purify you with it,[a] and take away from you the uncleanness of the devil, and that He might fortify your hearts and make firm (your) feet by it.[b] **12**When *y*our Lord revealed to the angels: I am with you, so make firm those who believe. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. So strike above the necks and strike every finger-tip of them.[c] **13**This is because they opposed Allah and His Messenger. And whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger — then surely Allah is Severe in retribution. **14**This — taste it, and (know) that for the disbelievers is the punishment of the Fire.

15 O you who believe, when you meet those who disbelieve marching for war, do not turn your backs to them. **16**And whoever turns his back to them on that day — unless manoeuvring for battle or turning to join a company — he indeed incurs Allah's wrath and his refuge is hell. And an evil destination it is. **17**So you did not kill them but Allah killed them, and *y*ou (O Prophet) did not strike when *y*ou struck (the enemy), but Allah struck (him),[d] and that He might

***a* (11-1)** Compare 25:25, which is a prophecy about the events of this remarkable battle: "And on the day when the heaven bursts apart with clouds, and the angels are sent down, as they are sent". The rainfall brought many advantages to the Muslims, for which see the next footnote.

***b* (11-2)** Before the rain fell the Muslim position was very weak. The enemy had the command of the water and the Muslims were in a low and sandy place. Therefore there were some who had misgivings, which, as is said here, were due to the devil's uncleanness. The enemy having taken possession of the drinking-water, the Muslims feared being troubled by thirst, which is called *the devil of the desert*. The rain strengthened the position of the Muslims and consequently comforted their hearts. This was a purification, for after the rainfall they all became certain of Divine help and so of their triumph over the enemy.

***c* (12)** The two phrases, *strike above the necks* and *strike the finger-tips,* respectively signify the killing of the enemy and disabling him so as to render him unfit for taking further part in fighting.

***d* (17-1)** *Ramā* carries a number of significances, including *throwing, flinging, assailing* and *striking*. It is used in connection with fighting, and therefore *striking* is its equivalent here. The first part of the verse about *killing* refers to the Muslims generally, the address being in the plural; and the second part, being in the singular, is understood as referring to the Holy Prophet. The Muslims killed the enemy, but it is affirmed that really they did not kill, but it was Allah Who killed them; the meaning apparently being that Allah's hand was working in

confer upon the believers a benefit from Himself.[a] Surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing. **18**This[b] — and (know) that Allah will weaken the struggle of the disbelievers. **19**If you sought a judgment, the judgment has indeed come to you; and if you cease (fighting), it is better for you. And if you return (to fighting), We (too) shall return and your forces will not avail you at all, though they may be many; and (know) that Allah is with the believers.

Section 3: **The way to success**

20 O you who believe, obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn away from Him while you hear. **21**And do not be like those who say, We hear; and they do not hear. **22**Surely the vilest of beasts, in Allah's sight, are the deaf, the dumb, who do not understand.[c] **23**And if Allah had known any good in them, He would have made them hear. And if He makes them hear, they would turn away while they are averse.

24 O you who believe, respond to Allah and His Messenger, when he calls you to that which gives you life.[d] And know that Allah comes in between a man and his heart,[e] and that to Him you will be gathered. **25**And guard yourselves against an affliction

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the battle. The same applies to the other passage relating to the striking of the enemy by the Holy Prophet. Whether the Prophet actually *threw* a handful of pebbles at the enemy, which discomfited the latter, is a different question. It was Allah's hand that killed them, and it was His hand that struck them and ultimately put them to rout.

a **(17-2)** The benefit spoken of here is a victory which strengthened the foundations of Islam, and dealt a deathblow to the evil designs of those who were determined to exterminate it, as is plainly stated in the next verse.

b **(18)** *This* here stands for: *this was the Divine purpose in bringing about this encounter*.

c **(22)** The deaf and the dumb signify those who are spiritually deaf and dumb — *those who do not understand*.

d **(24-1)** *Faith* or submission to Allah is *life*, and *disbelief* is *death*. By the expression *that which gives you life* some understand the *Quran*, while others take it to mean *jihād*, or exertion in the cause of truth. Evidently it is *faith.*

e **(24-2)** By *heart* is meant *the desires of the heart*. The Divine intervention is the cutting off of those desires. The faithful are enjoined to be quick in responding to the call of the Holy Prophet, and not to indulge in worldly desires, for these may soon be cut off. Or, the meaning is that they must respond to the call of the Holy Prophet in case, having deprived themselves of one occasion of doing good, the heart should be hardened, and, as a punishment for the first rejection, Allah may so turn it that it may not turn to good at all.

which may not strike those of you exclusively who are wrongdoers; and know that Allah is Severe in retribution.[a]

26 And remember when you were few, considered weak in the land, fearing if people should carry you off by force, He sheltered you and strengthened you with His help, and gave you good things that you might give thanks. **27**O you who believe, do not be unfaithful to Allah and the Messenger, nor be unfaithful to your trusts, while you know. **28**And know that your wealth and your children are a temptation, and that Allah is He with Whom there is a mighty reward.

Section 4: **Muslims to be Guardians of the Sacred Mosque**

29 O you who believe, if you keep your duty to Allah, He will grant you a distinction and do away with your evils and protect you. And Allah is the Lord of mighty grace. **30**And when those who disbelieved devised plans against *y*ou that they might confine *y*ou or kill *y*ou or drive *y*ou away — and they devised plans and Allah, too, had arranged a plan; and Allah is the Best of planners.[b] **31**And when Our messages are recited to them, they say: We have heard. If we wished, we could say the like of it; this is nothing but the stories of the ancients.[c]

32 And when they said: O Allah, if this is indeed the truth from You, then rain down on us stones from heaven or inflict on us a painful punishment. **33**And Allah would not punish them while *y*ou were among them; nor would Allah punish them while they seek forgiveness.[d] **34**And what excuse have they that Allah should not punish them while they hinder (people) from the Sacred Mosque and they are not its (true) guardians? Its guardians are only those

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a **(25)** This refers to afflictions that are of such a widespread nature as to overtake even others, in addition to those for whom they are primarily intended.

b **(30)** The reference is to the final plans of the Quraish when, the Companions having emigrated to Madinah, the Prophet was left alone at Makkah. The Divine plan was that the disbelievers should see the downfall of their power at the hands of the Prophet.

c **(31)** That this was an empty boast is confirmed by the fact that, although the Quran repeatedly challenged them to produce anything like it, they could not produce even the like of its shortest chapter.

d **(33)** The punishment was to overtake them when the Holy Prophet was no more among them, i.e., after his flight from Makkah. But even then the punishment might be averted if they asked for forgiveness.

who keep their duty, but most of them do not know.[a] **35**And their prayer at the House is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands.[b] Taste, then, the punishment, because you disbelieved.

36 Surely those who disbelieve spend their wealth to hinder (people) from the way of Allah. So they will go on spending it, then it will be to them a regret, then they will be overcome. And those who disbelieve will be gathered together to hell, **37**that Allah may separate the wicked from the good, and put the wicked upon one another, then heap them together, then cast them into hell. These indeed are the losers.

Section 5: **Badr as sign of the Prophet's truth**

38 Say to those who disbelieve, if they cease (fighting), what is past will be forgiven them; and if they return (to it), then the example of those of old has already gone.[c] **39**And fight them until there is no more persecution, and all religions are for Allah. But if they cease, then surely Allah is Seer of what they do.[d] **40**And if they turn back, then know that Allah is your Patron. Most excellent the Patron and most excellent the Helper!

41 And know that whatever you acquire in war, a fifth of it is for Allah and for the Messenger and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the traveller,[e] if you believe in Allah and

Part 10

***a* (34)** The words contain a prophecy not only as to the deprivation of the disbelieving Quraish of the guardianship of the Ka'bah, but also as to the passing of the guardianship into the hands of the Muslims.

***b* (35)** In fact the House was not used by them for offering prayers to God but for sacrilegious talk and gossiping.

***c* (38)** They had gone away from Badr quite discomfited, and they were told that, if they ceased fighting, they would be forgiven. Otherwise, they could read their own doom in the doom of those with whom Allah had dealt previously in similar circumstances.

***d* (39)** That is, if they cease fighting and put an end to their mischief, God's decree of punishment will not be executed. The state of religious liberty which Islam aimed at is put tersely in the two opening statements — *there is no more persecution* and *all religions are for Allah,* everyone being at liberty to hold any belief he likes.

***e* (41-1)** The one-fifth spoken of here is to be divided again into five parts, the Prophet, the near of kin, the orphans, the poor, and the traveller being equal sharers. The near of kin included all individuals belonging to the tribes of Bani

in what We revealed to Our servant, on the day of Distinction, the day on which the two forces met.[a] And Allah is Powerful over all things.

42 When you were on the nearer side (of the valley) and they were on the farther side, while the caravan was in a lower place than you.[b] And if you had tried to make a mutual appointment, you would certainly have broken away from the appointment, but [c] — in order that Allah might bring about a matter which had to be done;[d] that he who perished by clear argument might perish, and he who lived by clear argument might live.[e] And surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing: **43**When Allah showed them to *y*ou in *y*our dream as few[f] — and if He had shown them to *y*ou as many, you (O Muslims) would certainly have become weak-hearted and you would have disputed about the matter, but Allah saved (you). Surely He is Knower of what is in the hearts. **44**And when He showed them to you, when you met, as few in your eyes, and He

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Hashim and Bani Abdul Muttalib, to whom *zakāt* money was not allowed. The poor among them were thus paid from this source of income. As to the Holy Prophet's twenty-fifth, it was also used for the benefit of the Muslims. The remaining four-fifths of the acquisitions were divided among those who took part in the battle, as they were not otherwise paid for their services, but there is no order to this effect in the Quran itself. This arrangement was simply an exigency. War was forced on Muslims all of a sudden when the State had not yet been properly formed; there was no army at all, nor a treasury from which to pay it; and just as they were required to carry on war on the basis of voluntary gifts, so they were allowed a share in the war acquisitions. If the State pays its soldiers as it pays its civil servants, the war acquisitions would all go to the State treasury.

a **(41-2)** The day of Distinction (*yaum al-furqān*) referred to here is the Battle of Badr.

b **(42-1)** The Muslims were on *the side nearer to Madinah*, the main army of the Quraish was on *the side which was farther from Madinah*, while the caravan was in a lower place, i.e., *towards the sea-coast*, and farther away from Madinah, on its way to Makkah.

c **(42-2)** There is a break here, the meaning being *but an encounter was brought about without an appointment*. The Muslims were so weak that they could not think of making an appointment with the enemy — they would have broken away from the appointment.

d **(42-3)** The matter referred to is the defeat of the opponents of Islam.

e **(42-4)** The disbelievers had seen clear arguments of the Holy Prophet's truth, yet they rejected him and had thus perished in a spiritual sense; they were now vanquished in the battle and thus perished temporally.

f **(43)** The Holy Prophet's seeing them few in a vision must be interpreted as signifying their actual weakness, despite their great number.

made you to appear few in their eyes, in order that Allah might bring about a matter which had to be done.[a] And to Allah are all affairs returned.

Section 6: **Success does not depend on numbers**

45 O you who believe, when you meet an army, be firm, and remember Allah much, that you may be successful. **46**And obey Allah and His Messenger and do not dispute with one another so that you get weak-hearted and your power departs; and be steadfast. Surely Allah is with the steadfast.

47 And do not be like those who came forth from their homes exultingly and to be seen by people, and they hinder (people) from the way of Allah.[b] And Allah encompasses what they do. **48**And when the devil made their works seem good to them, and said: No man can overcome you this day, and I am your protector. But when the two armies came in sight of one another, he turned upon his heels, and said: Surely I am clear of you, I see what you do not see; surely I fear Allah.[c] And Allah is Severe in retribution.

Section 7: **Enemy's strength weakened**

49 And when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease said: Their religion has deluded them. And whoever trusts in Allah, then surely Allah is Mighty, Wise. **50**And if *y*ou could see when the angels cause to die those who disbelieve, striking their faces and their backs, and (saying): Taste the punishment of burning. **51**This is for what your hands have sent ahead, and because Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants — **52**in the manner of the people of Pharaoh and those before them, they disbelieved in Allah's messages, so Allah punished them for their sins. Surely Allah is Strong, Severe in retribution. **53**This is because Allah never changes a favour which He has conferred upon a people until they change their own condition — and because Allah is Hearing,

***a* (44)** Here we are told that they were also shown to be few to the Muslims when the two armies met. See 3:13 and footnote.

***b* (47)** This clearly refers to the army of the Quraish which had marched forth in great exultation to destroy Madinah.

***c* (48)** The person referred to here as the devil is said to have been Surāqa ibn Mālik who gave the Quraish promise of help. However, what is stated here may only be the devil's suggestion to the Quraish leaders.

Knowing — [54]in the manner of the people of Pharaoh, and those before them. They rejected the messages of their Lord, so We destroyed them for their sins. And We drowned Pharaoh's people and they were all wrongdoers.

55 Surely the vilest of beasts in Allah's sight are those who disbelieve, then they would not believe — [56]those with whom *y*ou make an agreement, then they break their agreement every time, and they do not keep their duty.[a] [57]So if *y*ou overtake them in war, scatter by them those who are behind them, that they may be mindful.[b] [58]And if *y*ou fear treachery on the part of a people, throw back to them (their treaty) on terms of equality. Surely Allah does not love the treacherous.[c]

Section 8: **Peace to be secured by strength**

59 And those who disbelieve should not think that they can outstrip (Us). Surely they cannot escape. [60]And make ready for them whatever force you can and horses tied at the frontier, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them, whom you do not know — Allah knows them.[d] And whatever you spend in Allah's way, it will be paid back to you fully and you will not be wronged.

61 And if they incline to peace, *y*ou (must) incline to it also,

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a **(56)** It shows how the opponents of Islam disregarded their responsibility and violated their agreements. The use of the words *every time* shows clearly that the Muslims never hesitated in making a new agreement when one was violated, but the disbelievers did not even then respect their agreements; hence, as a last resort, Muslims were allowed to repudiate unrespected agreements (v. 58).

b **(57)** That is, an exemplary punishment should be inflicted on them, so that a stop might be put to further fighting and bloodshed.

c **(58)** If the other party does not remain faithful to the agreement of peace, Muslims may also repudiate it. The word *fear* does not indicate that a mere apprehension, unsupported by any action on the other side's part, is sufficient for repudiation. Read it along with v. 62, and the meaning is clear.

d **(60)** Muslims had won a victory at Badr, though they were not even well-equipped and had made no preparation for the war. But they are told that they must in future keep themselves well prepared and avail themselves of all sources of strength, so that the enemy should by their very preparedness assume a peaceful attitude. It was evident that the weakness of the Muslims was a temptation for their opponents to attack them.

and trust in Allah. Surely He is the Hearer, the Knower. **62**And if they intend to deceive *y*ou, then surely Allah is sufficient for *y*ou.[a] He it is Who strengthened *y*ou with His help and with the believers, **63**and He has united their hearts. If *y*ou had spent all that is in the earth, *y*ou could not have united their hearts, but Allah united them. Surely He is Mighty, Wise. **64**O Prophet, Allah is sufficient for *y*ou and those who follow *y*ou from the believers.

Section 9: **Muslims to meet overwhelming numbers**

65 O Prophet, urge the believers to fight.[b] If there are of you twenty steadfast, they shall overcome two hundred; and if there are of you a hundred, they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they are a people who do not understand.[c] **66**Now Allah has lightened your burden and He knows that there is weakness in you. So if there are of you a hundred steadfast, they shall overcome two hundred; and if there are of you a thousand, they shall overcome two thousand by Allah's permission. And Allah is with the steadfast.[d]

67 It is not fit for a prophet to take captives unless he has fought and triumphed in the land. You desire the frail goods of this world, while Allah desires (for you) the Hereafter.[e] And Allah

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***a* (62)** The deceit is in relation to what has been said in the previous verse, the meaning being that *if they intend to deceive you under the cloak of peace*, even in such a case peace is to be accepted.

***b* (65-1)** It should be noted that the war to which Muslims were to be urged was the defensive war which they had to fight to save themselves and to protect the religion of Islam. The sword had been taken up against them; see 2:190, 2:217, 22:39, etc.

***c* (65-2)** There is a clear prophecy here that, despite their fewer numbers, Muslims shall be victorious. After the Battle of Badr came the Battle of Uhud, in which Muslims were less than 1 to 4 against the enemy; this was followed by the Battle of the Ahzāb, in which they were 1 to 10, yet the enemy was routed.

***d* (66)** The statements in verses 65 and 66 relate to two different states of the Muslims. At the time of the Battle of Badr there was no Muslim army in existence. They had very few arms, and they had never been trained. This is referred to in the words: *He knows that there is weakness in you*. So the Muslim forces as then constituted could at most be a match for double their numbers. But a time did come when they were a match for ten times their numbers. So both the statements in the Quran proved true.

***e* (67)** The commentators hold the opinion that this verse and the next refer

is Mighty, Wise. **68**If an ordinance from Allah had not gone before,[a] surely a great punishment would have befallen you for what you were going to do. **69**Eat then of the lawful and good (things) which you have acquired in war, and keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Section 10: **Relations of Muslim State with others**

70 O Prophet, say to those of the captives who are in your hands: If Allah knows anything good in your hearts, He will give you better than what has been taken from you, and will forgive you. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **71**And if they intend to be treacherous to *y*ou, so indeed they have been treacherous to Allah before, but He gave (you) mastery over them. And Allah is Knowing, Wise.

72 Surely those who believed and fled (their homes) and struggled hard in Allah's way with their wealth and their lives, and those who gave shelter and helped — these are friends of one another. And those who believed and did not flee, you are not responsible for their protection until they flee. And if they seek help from you in the matter of religion, it is your duty to help (them) except against a people between whom and you there is a treaty.[b]

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to releasing the prisoners of war taken at Badr after taking ransom from them, which act, it is said, is here disapproved. But various considerations show that these verses refer to some other incidents. The reference is to the *desire* — not to an action already completed — of a party of the Muslims referred to in v. 7, *and you loved that the one not armed should be yours*. Some Muslims desired to attack and capture the unarmed caravan, but depredations like these, though committed by disbelievers upon Muslims, were not fit for a prophet. He must fight a hard fight in his defence first and then, if he overcomes the enemy, he may take prisoners. Thus this injunction also declares slavery to be illegal, and allows only the retaining of those who are taken prisoners in war. The *frail goods of this world* appropriately refer to the caravan and its merchandise, while the addition of the concluding words in v. 69, *eat then of the lawful and good things which you have acquired in war*, shows that the ransom received on account of the prisoners is among the *lawful and good things*.

a **(68)** That ordinance from Allah was to bring about an encounter with the main army of the Quraish at Badr. It is referred to in v. 7 and v. 42.

b **(72)** Those who believed, and, having been persecuted, fled from their homes, i.e., the *Muhājirīn,* formed a community at Madinah along with those who gave them shelter and helped them, i.e., the *Anṣār*. But there were those who

And Allah is Seer of what you do. **73**And those who disbelieve are friends of one another. If you do not do it, there will be persecution in the land and great mischief.[a] **74**And those who believed and fled and struggled hard in Allah's way, and those who gave shelter and helped — these are the believers truly. For them is forgiveness and an honourable provision. **75**And those who believed afterwards and fled and struggled hard along with you, they are of you. And the relatives are nearer to one another in the ordinance of Allah.[b] Surely Allah is Knower of all things.

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chose to remain in their homes. The Muslim community at Madinah could not undertake to guard the interests of such persons, and this is what is meant by saying, *you are not responsible for their protection*. But if they seek help in the matter of religion, it is incumbent on the Muslim community to give them help, unless there exists a treaty of alliance with the people against whom such help is sought.

a **(73)** If you do not help your brethren in the matter of religion, the disbelievers will become more daring in their persecutions and in causing mischief and disorder in the land.

b **(75)** When even strangers who have accepted Islam and fled from their homes become "of you", those who have in addition ties of relationship, possess every title to have their interests guarded by the Muslim community.

Chapter 9

Al-Barā'at Immunity

The name of this chapter (which is also called *Al-Taubah* or *Repentance*) refers to the declaration in its opening verses that Muslims were now not subject to their agreements with certain idolatrous Arab tribes who had been constantly breaking them (verses 7–13). The chapter thus first deals with the subject of agreements with them as depending on their adherence to them, and goes on to prophesy the triumph of Islam in Arabia and later in the world. It then refers to the expedition to Tabūk by Muslims undertaken at great sacrifice, and deals with the subject of those who excused themselves and the hypocrites. At the end, Muslims are reminded of the importance of the propagation of Islam and contributing towards it, which was the real object of Islam. This chapter was revealed in 9 A.H. This is the only chapter of the Quran not opening with *Bismillāh,* "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful", as it is, in a sense, a continuation of the last chapter.

Section 1: **Declaration of Immunity**

1 A declaration of immunity from Allah and His Messenger to those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement.[a] **2**So go about in the land for four months and know that you cannot escape Allah and that Allah will disgrace the disbelievers. **3**And an announcement from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage that Allah is free from liability to the idolaters, and so is His Messenger.[b] So if you repent, it will be better for you; and if you turn away, then know that you will not escape Allah. And announce painful punishment to those who disbelieve — **4**except those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement, then they have not failed you in anything and have

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a **(1)** This is a declaration of immunity from obligations with such of the idolatrous tribes of Arabia as had repeatedly broken their agreements with the Muslims. They broke their agreements again and again (8:56), yet the Muslims were enjoined to accept peace if the disbelievers consented to it, even after repeated violations (8:61). But this state of things could not continue long, for it was soon found that it was impossible to trust such neighbours. This repudiation of agreements took place on a large scale when the Muslims were absent on the Tabūk expedition.

b **(3)** The first thirteen verses of this chapter were publicly proclaimed by Ali on the occasion of the pilgrimage in 9 A.H.

not backed up anyone against you; so fulfil their agreement to the end of their term. Surely Allah loves those who keep their duty.[a]

5 So when the sacred months have passed, kill the idolaters, wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush.[b] But if they repent and keep up prayer and give the due charity, leave their way free.[c] Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **6** And if anyone of the idolaters seek *y*our protection, protect him till he hears the word of Allah, then convey him to his place of safety. This is because they are a people who do not know.[d]

Section 2: **Reasons for the Immunity**

7 How can there be an agreement for the idolaters with Allah and with His Messenger, except those with whom you made an agreement at the Sacred Mosque? So as long as they are true to you,

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***a* (4)** The exception given here makes it clear that the Muslims were not fighting with the idolaters on account of their religion, but on account of their having been untrue to their agreements.

***b* (5-1)** The clear exception of the last verse shows that by the idolaters here are meant, not all idolaters or polytheists wherever they may be found in the world, not even all idolaters of Arabia, but only those idolatrous tribes of Arabia assembled at the pilgrimage who had first made agreements with the Muslims and then violated them. The order to kill them and to make them prisoners and to besiege them and ambush them amounts clearly to an order to fight against them, as it is in war only that all these actions are made lawful. (*Editor's Note:* The expression "kill them wherever you find them" has also been used in 2:190–191, where it is also declared clearly: "And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you but do not be aggressive". Thus "wherever you find them" means wherever you find those who are engaged in fighting against you, after they have been the first to attack you.)

***c* (5-2)** The whole verse relates to certain idolatrous Arab tribes who had broken their engagements with the Muslims, and who had now been apprised of a similar repudiation by the Muslims. They had so often broken their word that they could no more be trusted. Yet, if they joined the brotherhood of Islam, and there was an absolute change in their condition, the punishment which they otherwise deserved could be remitted. It was a case of forgiving a guilty people who had repented. Nothing could be further from the truth than the allegation that this offers to the disbelievers the alternative of either being killed or accepting Islam.

***d* (6)** This verse leaves no doubt that the Holy Prophet was never ordered by God to kill anyone on account of his religion. Any idolater seeking the protection of the Muslims in order to learn about Islam was to be granted safe conduct to return home in case he did not think it fit to embrace Islam.

be true to them. Surely Allah loves those who keep their duty.[a] **8**How (can it be)? And if they prevail against you, they respect neither ties of relationship nor covenant in your case. They would please you with their mouths while their hearts refuse; and most of them are transgressors.

9 They have taken a small price for the messages of Allah, so they hinder (people) from His way. Surely evil is what they do. **10**They respect neither ties of relationship nor covenant in the case of a believer. And these are they who go beyond the limits.[b] **11**But if they repent and keep up prayer and give the due charity, they are your brethren in faith. And We make the messages clear for a people who know. **12**And if they break their oaths after their agreement and revile your religion, then fight the leaders of disbelief — surely their oaths are nothing — so that they may cease.[c]

13 Will you not fight a people who broke their oaths and aimed at the expulsion of the Messenger, and they attacked you first? [d] Do you fear them? But Allah has more right that you should fear Him, if you are believers. **14**Fight them; Allah will punish them at your hands and bring them to disgrace, and assist you against them and relieve the hearts of a believing people, **15**and remove the rage of their hearts. And Allah turns (mercifully) to whom He pleases. And Allah is Knowing, Wise. **16**Do you think that you would be left alone while Allah has not yet known those of you who struggle hard and do not take anyone as an intimate friend besides Allah and His Messenger and the believers? And Allah is Aware of what you do.

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a **(7)** So long as the idolaters were true to their agreements, Muslims were required to be true to them. Just as in the case of war, Muslims were not allowed to fight until the enemy had first attacked, so, in the case of repudiation of agreements, it was the enemy who first repudiated the agreement.

b **(10)** Note the repeated assertions of the Quran that the disbelievers were not to be fought against for their disbelief but for their being first in starting war or repudiating agreements.

c **(12)** Those leaders of disbelief are to be fought against *who break their oaths after their agreements*.

d **(13)** *Editor's Note:* This again makes clear that Muslims were only required to fight those who attacked them first.

Section 3: **Idolaters' service of the Sacred House**

17 The idolaters have no right to maintain the mosques of Allah, while bearing witness to disbelief against themselves.[a] These it is whose deeds are fruitless; and in the Fire will they abide. **18**Only he can maintain the mosques of Allah who believes in Allah and the Last Day, and keeps up prayer and gives the due charity and fears none but Allah. So these it is who may be of the guided ones. **19**Do you hold the giving of drink to the pilgrims and the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque equal to (the service of) one who believes in Allah and the Last Day and strives hard in Allah's way? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. **20**Those who believed and fled (their homes), and strove hard in Allah's way with their wealth and their lives, are much higher in rank with Allah. And it is these that shall triumph. **21**Their Lord gives them good news of mercy and pleasure, from Himself, and Gardens in which lasting blessings will be theirs, **22**abiding in them forever. Surely Allah has a mighty reward with Him.

23 O you who believe, do not take your fathers and your brothers for friends if they love disbelief above faith. And whoever of you takes them for friends, such are the wrongdoers. **24**Say: If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your wives and your kinsfolk and the wealth you have acquired, and trade whose dullness you fear, and dwellings you love, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way, then wait till Allah brings His command to pass. And Allah does not guide the transgressing people.[b]

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a **(17)** By *the mosques of Allah* is meant particularly the *Sacred Mosque at Makkah*, as being the centre of all the mosques of the world. This is made clear in v. 19. It had long remained in the hands of the idolaters, who visited and repaired it, having placed a large number of idols within it. With the conquest of Makkah the Sacred Mosque was denuded of all idols, and was now as pure an emblem of monotheism as in the time of Abraham. Hence the idol-worshippers had nothing to do with it now.

b **(24)** A true Muslim may have wealth, may carry on trade, may have magnificent houses, but these should not be dearer to him than Allah and exertion in His path. He should be ready to sacrifice all these interests for a higher purpose, before which all these sink into insignificance. The Quran does not require one actually to hate riches, but rather not to be obsessed by wealth to the neglect of one's higher duties. The acquisition of wealth is not harmful so long as it is not made the real aim of life, but has its proper place as the means to an end.

Section 4: **Islam made triumphant in Arabia**

25 Certainly Allah helped you in many battlefields, and on the day of Hunain, when your great numbers made you proud, but they availed you nothing, and the earth with all its vastness was narrowed for you, then you turned back retreating.[a] **26**Then Allah sent down His calm upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and sent armies which you did not see, and punished those who disbelieved. And such is the reward of the disbelievers. **27**Then will Allah, after this, turn mercifully to whom He pleases. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

28 O you who believe, the idolaters are surely unclean,[b] so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year of theirs.[c] And if you fear poverty, then Allah will enrich you out of His grace, if He please.[d] Surely Allah is Knowing, Wise. **29**Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor follow the Religion of Truth, out of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the tax in acknowledgement of superiority and they are in a state of subjection.[e]

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a **(25)** The Battle of Hunain, fought in 8 A.H. in the valley of Hunain, about three miles from Makkah, differed from the other battles in that the Muslims here outnumbered the enemy. However, the archers of the enemy were good marksmen, and had occupied strong positions in the mountain passes. The Muslim army contained some men from Makkah still adhering to idolatry. Unfortunately this was the advance party of the army and, unable to face the archers, they retreated, causing disorder to the whole army. The Holy Prophet, however, led the assault, at first alone, in face of the archers, but was soon joined by others and a victory was obtained, as the next verse shows.

b **(28-1)** Because they indulged in evil practices and went naked round the Ka‘bah. Compare 5:90, where idols are declared to be unclean.

c **(28-2)** The year of the proclamation, i.e., 9 A.H.

d **(28-3)** The importance of Makkah as a commercial centre lay in the fact that the whole of Arabia repaired to it in the season of the pilgrimage, and there carried out important commercial transactions. The prohibition referred to in the first part of the verse could have been easily foreseen as affecting the commerce, and consequently the prosperity of Makkah, but worldly or business considerations never interfered with the carrying out of the moral reforms of Islam.

e **(29)** The great Christian power, the Roman Empire, had just mobilized its forces for the subjection of the new religion, and the Tabūk expedition took place, which is dealt with further on in this chapter. As the object of this Christian power

Section 5: **Islam will triumph in the world**

30 And the Jews say: Ezra is the son of Allah; [a] and the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of Allah. These are the words of their mouths. They imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before.[b] Allah's curse be on them! How they are turned away (from truth)! **31**They take their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah,[c] and (also) the Messiah, son of Mary. And they were enjoined that they should serve one God only — there is no god

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was simply the subjection of the Muslims, their final defeat by the Muslims is spoken of as subjection. It was not in any way the object of the Quran to bring the Christians into subjection. On the other hand, the Christians first moved themselves to bring Muslim Arabia under subjection. The *jizyah* or tax spoken of here is, according to Lane's Lexicon, *the tax that is taken from the free non-Muslim subjects of the Muslim Government whereby they ratify the compact that ensures them protection.*

The permission to fight given to Muslims is subject to the condition that the enemy should first take up the sword (2:190). The Holy Prophet never overstepped this limit, nor did his followers. He fought against the Arabs when they took up the sword to destroy the Muslims, and he led an expedition against the Christians when the Roman Empire first mobilized its forces with the object of subjugating the Muslims. When he found that the enemy had not yet taken the initiative, he did not attack the Roman Empire, but returned without fighting. Later on, however, the Roman Empire, like the Persians, fomented trouble against the newly established Muslim Kingdom, as a result of which both these empires came into conflict with the Muslims and, despite the fact that both the Persians and the Romans were very powerful nations with unlimited resources and strong military organizations, and that they both tried at the same time to subjugate Islam, the result was what is predicted here in clear words — they were both reduced to a state of subjection by an insignificant nation like the Arabs.

***a* (30-1)** It has been shown by Muslim historians that there was a sect among the Jews who raised Ezra to the dignity of godhead or son of God. The Quran never blames the Jewish nation as a whole for entertaining this belief. However, the word *son* in case of Ezra may have been used here freely as meaning *a special favourite,* in the same way as elsewhere the Quran says of the Jews and the Christians that they call themselves *the sons of Allah and His beloved ones* (5:18).

***b* (30-2)** We are here told that the Christian doctrine that Jesus Christ was the son of God was borrowed from earlier pagan people. Recent research has established the fact beyond all doubt. In fact, when St. Paul saw that the Jews would on no account accept Jesus Christ as a messenger of God, he introduced the pagan doctrine of sonship of God into the Christian religion, so that it might become more acceptable to the pagans.

***c* (31)** This does not mean that they took them actually for gods; the meaning is that they followed them blindly in what they enjoined and what they forbade, attaching to them a Divine dignity. Muslims who accord a similar position to their *ulama,* spiritual leaders or saints are guilty of the same error.

but He. Glory be to Him from what they set up as partners (with Him)!

32 They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will allow nothing except the perfection of His light, though the disbelievers are averse.[a] **33**He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions, though those who set up partners (with Allah) are averse.[b]

34 O you who believe, surely many of the doctors of law and monks eat away people's property falsely, and hinder (them) from Allah's way. And those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's way — announce to them a painful punishment, **35**on the day when it will be heated in the Fire of hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs will be branded with it: This is what you hoarded up for yourselves, so taste what you used to hoard.[c]

36 Surely the number of months with Allah is twelve months by Allah's ordinance, since the day when He created the heavens and the earth — of these four are sacred. That is the right religion;

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a **(32)** This is a prophecy of the ultimate triumph of Islam in face of severe opposition. All opposition to truth, whether based on force or propaganda, is here compared with putting out the Divine light by blowing with the mouth to show that all such attempts would prove futile. The Divine light will be made perfect, by which is meant the triumph of Islam, as the next verse states clearly.

b **(33)** The prophecy of the ultimate triumph of Islam in the whole world is repeated three times in the Quran, in exactly the same words — here and in 48:28 and 61:9. In Arabia itself, Islam became triumphant in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. After his death, the first century of the Muslim era saw vast Christian communities swelling the ranks of Islam, in Egypt, North Africa, Asia Minor, Persia and Central Asia. More amazing was the fact that Islam, coming in contact with other great religions — with Zoroastrianism in Persia, with Buddhism and Hinduism in India and Afghanistan, and with Confucianism in China — conquered the hearts of the followers of every religion and they accepted the message of Truth in vast numbers. And the final manifestation of this great prophecy is foreshadowed in the gradual acceptance of the principles of Islam in the whole world today, despite the fact that the political power of Islam is at its lowest ebb.

c **(35)** The punishment of an evil is spoken of throughout the Quran as similar to the evil. Even in this world, a man feels a torment similar to the nature of the evil in which he indulges. Being branded with the hoarded wealth is thus a fit description of the punishment of the hoarders.

so do not wrong yourselves in regard to them.[a] And fight the idolaters all together as they fight you all together.[b] And know that Allah is with those who keep their duty. **37**Postponing (of the sacred month) is only an addition in disbelief, by which those who disbelieve are led astray. They allow it one year and forbid it (another) year, that they may agree in the number (of months) which Allah has made sacred, and thus make lawful what Allah has forbidden.[c] The evil of their doings is made to seem good to them. And Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.

Section 6: **The Tabūk Expedition**

38 O you who believe, what (excuse) have you that when it is said to you, Go forth in Allah's way, you should incline heavily to earth? Are you contented with this world's life instead of the Hereafter? The provision of this world's life is but little as compared with the Hereafter.[d] **39**If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment, and bring in your place a people other than you, and you can do Him no harm.[e] And Allah is Powerful over all things.

40 If you do not help him, Allah certainly helped him when those who disbelieved expelled him — he being the second of

a **(36-1)** The allusion here is to the Arab practice of postponing the pilgrimage to a month other than that in which it fell, for which see the next verse.

b **(36-2)** Fighting was prohibited in the sacred months (2:217). Excepting this, the Muslims were told to fight with the idolaters *as* the idolaters fought with them, i.e., since all idolaters united in fighting with the Muslims, the latter, too, should unite in fighting with them.

c **(37)** The reference here is to the practice of postponing observance of the sacred month, thus allowing an ordinary month to be observed as sacred and a sacred month to be treated as ordinary. This practice interfered with the security of life which was guaranteed in the sacred months, and is, therefore, denounced.

d **(38)** This refers to the expedition of Tabūk, which was undertaken in the middle of 9 A.H. owing to the threatening attitude of the Roman Empire. There were many hindrances to the raising of an army sufficient to meet the strong forces of the Roman Empire, the main ones being: a great drought, the length of the journey to Syria, the ripening of the fruits which were now ready to be gathered, the heat, and the organization and power of the Roman army. In spite of all these difficulties, 30,000 men gathered round the Holy Prophet's banner.

e **(39)** The reference here and in what follows is to certain men, who, while professing belief, hesitated to accept the Holy Prophet's call to get ready for the expedition.

the two; when they were both in the cave, when he said to his companion: Do not grieve, surely Allah is with us.[a] So Allah sent down His tranquillity on him and strengthened him with forces which you did not see, and made lowest the word of those who disbelieved. And the word of Allah, that is the uppermost. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.

41 Go forth, light and heavy,[b] and strive hard in Allah's way with your wealth and your lives. This is better for you, if you know. **42**If it had been a near gain and a short journey, they would certainly have followed *y*ou, but the hard journey was too long for them.[c] And they will swear by Allah: If we had been able, we would have gone forth with you. They cause their own souls to perish; and Allah knows that they are liars.

Section 7: **The hypocrites**

43 Allah pardon *y*ou![d] Why did *y*ou permit them until those who spoke the truth had become apparent to *y*ou and *y*ou had known the liars? **44**Those who believe in Allah and the Last Day do not ask permission from *y*ou (to stay away) from striving hard with their wealth and their persons. And Allah is Knower of those who keep their duty. **45**They alone ask permission from *y*ou who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, and their hearts are in doubt, so in their doubt they waver. **46**And if they had intended to go forth,

a **(40)** This refers to the Holy Prophet's flight from Makkah, when he was forced to hide himself in a cave called Thaur, about three miles from Makkah, with only one companion, Abu Bakr, "the second of the two". The believers are told that Allah saved the Prophet from the hands of his enemies when he had just one companion amidst a whole nation of enemies, and that Allah would help him now.

b **(41)** That is, whether it is easy or difficult for you to proceed or whether you are sufficiently armed or not.

c **(42)** Tabūk was midway between Madinah and Damascus. The Arabs were accustomed to fighting near home; hence, the distance was one of the chief considerations which held back those who were insincere.

d **(43)** This expression does not convey the significance of pardon of sins; it is rather the equivalent of *Allah bless you!* or *may Allah set your affairs aright!* In previous battles, too, the hypocrites always stayed away, offering one excuse or another. But the Divine purpose in this last expedition of the Holy Prophet was to bring about a clear distinction, and to clean the Muslim society of the hypocritical element thoroughly. Such a distinction was really brought about later on as verses 83–84 point out.

they would certainly have provided equipment for it; but Allah did not like their going forth. So He withheld them, and it was said: Hold back with those who hold back. **47**If they had gone forth with you, they would have added to you nothing but trouble, and would have hurried to and fro among you seeking (to sow) dissension among you. And among you there are those who would listen to them. And Allah well knows the wrongdoers. **48**Certainly they sought (to sow) dissension before, and they devised plots against *y*ou till the Truth came, and Allah's command prevailed, though they did not like (it).

49 And among them is he who says: Excuse me and do not try me. Surely into trial have they already fallen, and truly hell encompasses the disbelievers. **50**If good befalls *y*ou, it grieves them; and if hardship afflicts *y*ou, they say: Indeed we had taken care of our affair before. And they turn away rejoicing. **51**Say: Nothing will afflict us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our Patron; and on Allah let the believers rely. **52**Say: Do you await for us but one of two most excellent things?[a] And we await for you that Allah will afflict you with punishment from Himself or by our hands. So wait; we too are waiting with you.[b]

53 Say: Spend willingly or unwillingly, it will not be accepted from you. Surely you are a transgressing people. **54**And nothing hinders their contributions being accepted from them, except that they disbelieve in Allah and in His Messenger and they do not come to prayer except as lazy people, nor do they spend (on good works) but reluctantly. **55**Do not, then, let their wealth nor their children excite *y*our admiration. Allah only wishes to punish them by means of these in this world's life and (that) their souls may depart while they are disbelievers.[c] **56**And they swear by Allah that they are

***a* (52-1)** The two most excellent things are: the laying down of life in the cause of Truth, or being sharer in the ultimate triumph of Truth.

***b* (52-2)** The only punishment that the hypocrites received from the hands of the Muslims was that they were named and asked to leave the mosque. Otherwise their liberty was not interfered with. See also the next verse.

***c* (55)** The hypocrites experienced earthly torture about their property and children for two reasons: (1) because, avowing their belief in Islam, they had to take some share in its defensive expeditions and thus spend part of their property, unwillingly though it was, in the cause of Islam; (2) the children of many of them were true believers, and they knew that after their death their property and their

truly of you. And they are not of you, but they are a people who are afraid. **57**If they could find a refuge or caves or a place to enter, they would certainly have turned to it, running away in all haste.

58 And some of them blame *y*ou in the matter of the (distribution of) charity. So if they are given out of it, they are pleased, and if they are not given out of it — lo! — they are enraged. **59**And (better it would be) if they were content with what Allah and His Messenger gave them, and had said: Allah is sufficient for us, Allah will soon give us (more) out of His grace and His Messenger too — surely to Allah we make petition.

Section 8: **The hypocrites**

60 (The due) charity[a] is only for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer it, and those whose hearts are made to incline (to truth), and (to free) the captives, and those in debt, and in the way of Allah and for the traveller — an ordinance from Allah.[b] And Allah is Knowing, Wise.

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children were to become a source of strength to the very religion which they tried to extirpate.

a **(60-1)** The word *ṣadaqāt,* used here for charity, refers in this verse to the *obligatory charity* called *zakāt*, and not to voluntary alms which is its common meaning. This is shown by the concluding words of the verse, which call it *an ordinance* from Allah.

b **(60-2)** The verse defines the objects for which the *zakāt* or due charity may be spent. Eight heads of expenditure are recognized. There are the poor, or those in difficult circumstances. Then there are the needy, by which are meant people who need some help to enable them to earn their living; poor students and craftsmen or business men without sufficient means are included in this category. Thirdly, there are the collectors of *zakāt* and other people employed to administer the funds. This shows that the institution was meant for raising a public fund, whose management should entirely be in the hands of a public body. In the fourth class are people whose hearts are made to incline to Truth — carrying the message of Truth to them needs funds, and there are also people who may need help if they accept the Truth. The fifth head relates to the freeing of the prisoners of war. Islam thus laid down a permanent basis for the abolition of slavery. The sixth class is that of debtors — people who incur debts for right purposes. Squanderers of wealth are, however, not included in this category. The seventh head is in general words "in the way of Allah". This would include those fighting in defence of faith and the community, or those engaged in propagating Islamic truths, but the words may be taken generally and include every charitable purpose. The eighth head is that of travellers, people who are stranded in a country, to whatever religion or nation they may belong.

61 And some of them molest the Prophet and say, He is (all) ear.[a] Say: A hearer of good for you — he believes in Allah and believes the faithful, and is a mercy for those of you who believe. And those who molest the Messenger of Allah, for them is a painful punishment. **62**They swear by Allah to you to please you; and Allah — as well as His Messenger — has a greater right that they should please Him, if they are believers.[b] **63**Do they not know that whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger, for him is the Fire of hell to abide in it? That is the grievous disgrace.

64 The hypocrites fear that a chapter may be sent down concerning them, telling them plainly of what is in their hearts. Say: Go on mocking, surely Allah will bring to light what you fear. **65**And if *y*ou ask them, they would certainly say: We were only talking idly and sporting. Say: Was it Allah and His messages and His Messenger that you mocked? **66**Make no excuse, you disbelieved after your believing. If We pardon some of you, We shall punish others because they are guilty.[c]

Section 9: **The hypocrites**

67 The hypocrites, men and women, are all alike. They enjoin evil and forbid good and withhold their hands. They have forsaken Allah, so He has forsaken them. Surely the hypocrites are the transgressors. **68**Allah promises the hypocrites, men and women, and the disbelievers the Fire of hell to abide in it. It is enough for them. And Allah curses them, and for them is a lasting punishment. **69**Like those before you — they were stronger than you in power and had more wealth and children. So they enjoyed their portion; thus have you enjoyed your portion as those before you enjoyed their portion, and you indulge in idle talk as they did. These are they whose deeds are fruitless in this world and the Hereafter, and these are they who are the losers.

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a **(61)** The hypocrites made various derogatory remarks concerning the Holy Prophet, saying among other things that he was a man who believed everything that he heard, and they were therefore sure that they would make him believe their hypocritical professions.

b **(62)** Though Allah and His Messenger are both mentioned together, the duty of the faithful is here said to be to please *Him*, i.e., Allah alone.

c **(66)** History shows that most of the hypocrites ultimately repented and sincerely joined the ranks of the faithful.

70 Has not the story reached them of those before them — of the people of Noah and Ād and Thamūd, and the people of Abraham and the dwellers of Midian and the overthrown cities? Their messengers came to them with clear arguments. So Allah did not wrong them but they wronged themselves.

71 And the believers, men and women, are friends of one another. They enjoin good and forbid evil and keep up prayer and give the due charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. As for these, Allah will have mercy on them. Surely Allah is Mighty, Wise. **72**Allah has promised to the believers, men and women, Gardens, in which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in Gardens of perpetual abode. And greatest of all is Allah's goodly pleasure. That is the mighty achievement.

Section 10: **The hypocrites**

73 O Prophet, strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be firm against them.[a] And their abode is hell, and evil is the destination. **74**They swear by Allah that they said nothing. And certainly they did speak the word of disbelief, and disbelieved after their Islam, and they aimed (to do) what they could not attain.[b] And they sought revenge only because Allah — as well as His Messenger — had enriched them out of His grace.[c] So if they repent, it will be good for them; and if they turn away, Allah will punish them with a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter; and they shall have in the earth neither a friend nor a helper.

75 And some of them made a covenant with Allah: If He give

***a* (73)** *Jihād* signifies *striving hard*. It is in a secondary sense that the word signifies *fighting*, and it is repeatedly used in the Quran in its primary significance. It is a fact that those who professed Islam insincerely were never fought against by the Muslims — as on this occasion and on the occasion of the Battle of Uhud. The Holy Prophet is commanded here to carry on a *jihād* against disbelievers as well as hypocrites. Hence the only significance that can be attached to these words is that he must continue to exert himself hard in preaching both to the disbelievers and the hypocrites.

***b* (74-1)** They did their best to put an end to the life of the Holy Prophet and bring about the extirpation of Islam.

***c* (74-2)** The advent of the Muslims in Madinah had enriched its inhabitants. Was it not, then, a matter for wonder that those men who had gained by Islam should turn against their very benefactors?

us out of His grace, we will certainly give in charity and be of the righteous. **76**But when He gave them out of His grace, they became miserly with it and they turned away and they are averse. **77**So He repaid them with hypocrisy in their hearts till the day when they meet Him, because they broke their promise with Allah and because they lied. **78**Do they not know that Allah knows their hidden thoughts and their secret counsels, and that Allah is the great Knower of the unseen things?

79 Those who taunt the free givers of charity among the believers as well as those who cannot find anything (to give) but with their hard labour — they scoff at them. Allah will pay them back their mockery; and for them is a painful punishment.[a] **80**Ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them. Even if *y*ou ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them. This is because they disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger. And Allah does not guide the transgressing people.[b]

Section 11: **The hypocrites**

81 Those who were left behind were glad on account of their remaining behind Allah's Messenger, and they disliked to strive in

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a **(79)** When subscriptions were raised for the expedition to Tabūk, the wealthier members of the Muslim community gave large donations, while the poorer ones, the labourers, also paid their mite out of their hard earnings. The hypocrites taunted both, the former as making a show of their wealth, the latter as bringing in their small subscriptions only to be counted among the subscribers.

b **(80)** Spiritual relations with the hypocrites were henceforth cut off. The mention of *seventy* may not indicate the specific number here. When Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the recognized leader of the hypocrites, died, the Holy Prophet was asked to conduct the burial service. The Holy Prophet got up, but Umar objected on the ground that Abdullah was a hypocrite, and referred to his hostile attitude throughout his life. The Holy Prophet replied that Allah had given him a choice (referring to the words of this verse: *Ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them*), and that he would ask forgiveness for him for over seventy times, so that forgiveness could be extended to the dead man. Then he offered prayers for him. Verse 84 is said to have been revealed then to stop the offering of prayers for those who were known to be hypocrites (Bukhari, 23:84, h. 1366).

The incident shows how kind and forgiving the Holy Prophet was to his severest enemies. Abdullah ibn Ubayy was the man who had led the hypocrite movement against him, and thus was not only one of his worst enemies, but a most dangerous one, because he was aware of all the movements of the Muslims and deceived them at the most critical moments. Yet the Holy Prophet forgave him entirely.

Allah's way with their property and their persons, and said: Do not go forth in the heat. Say: The Fire of hell is fiercer in heat. If only they could understand! **82**Then let them laugh a little and weep much — a recompense for what they earned. **83**So if Allah bring *y*ou back to some of them, then they ask *y*our permission to go forth, say: Never shall you go forth with me and never shall you fight an enemy with me. You chose to sit (at home) the first time, so sit (now) with those who remain behind.[a]

84 And never offer prayer for anyone of them who dies, nor stand by his grave. Surely they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger and they died in transgression.[b] **85**And do not let their wealth and their children excite *y*our admiration. Allah only intends to punish them thereby in this world, and (that) their souls may depart while they are disbelievers.

86 And when a chapter is revealed, saying, Believe in Allah and strive hard along with His Messenger, the wealthy among them ask permission of *y*ou and say: Leave us (behind), that we may be with those who sit (at home). **87**They prefer to be with those who remain behind, and their hearts are sealed so they do not understand. **88**But the Messenger and those who believe with him strive hard with their property and their persons. And these it is for whom are the good things and these it is who are successful. **89**Allah has prepared for them Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide therein. That is the mighty achievement.

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a **(83)** This is the only punishment given to the hypocrites, namely, that they were not allowed to take part in future expeditions against the enemies of the Muslims. It is also related that from one of them the Holy Prophet and the three Caliphs who followed him refused to accept the *zakāt*. These were the only disadvantages, if it is right to call them so, which the hypocrites suffered. They were not looked upon as members of the Muslim community, but as citizens they enjoyed all the rights of other citizens.

b **(84)** The Prophet is now told that, though they professed Islam outwardly, they were disbelievers at heart, and the burial service, which was only for Muslims, should not be extended to them. But it was through Divine revelation that the Prophet learnt that they were really disbelievers. It is, further, clear from these words that those who were known to be hypocrites were not fought against but lived to die a natural death. There is not a single case on record of any one of them having been put to death. *Standing by the grave* refers to the Holy Prophet's practice of praying for the deceased standing by his grave after the burial.

Section 12: **The hypocrites**

90 And the defaulters from among the dwellers of the desert came that permission might be given to them, and they sat (at home) who lied to Allah and His Messenger. A painful punishment will afflict those of them who disbelieve. **91**No blame lies on the weak, nor on the sick, nor on those who can find nothing to spend, if they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger. There is no way (to blame) against the doers of good. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful — **92**nor on those to whom, when they came to *y*ou that *y*ou should carry them, *y*ou said: I cannot find anything on which to carry you.[a] They went back, their eyes overflowing with tears of grief that they could not find anything to spend. **93**The way (to blame) is only against those who ask permission of *y*ou, though they are rich. They have chosen to be with those who remained behind; and Allah has sealed their hearts, so they do not know.

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94 They will make excuses to you when you return to them. Say: Make no excuse, we shall not believe you; Allah has informed us of matters relating to you. And Allah and His Messenger will now see your actions, then you will be brought back to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, then He will inform you of what you did.[b] **95**They will swear by Allah to you, when you return to them, so that you may leave them alone. So leave them alone.[c] Surely they are unclean and their refuge is hell — a recompense for what they earned. **96**They will swear to you that you may be pleased with them. But if you are pleased with them, yet surely Allah is not pleased with the transgressing people.

97 The dwellers of the desert are hardest in disbelief and hypocrisy, and most disposed not to know the limits of what Allah has revealed to His Messenger. And Allah is Knowing, Wise. **98**And some of the dwellers of the desert take what they spend to

a **(92)** What they wanted in order to join the expedition, and what the Holy Prophet could not find for them, were *beasts* on which they should be carried, along with their provisions and necessaries. See also 19:27 footnote 1.

b **(94)** Evidently these verses were revealed when the Holy Prophet was away from Madinah, and the statements made in them are therefore prophetical, being exactly fulfilled on his return.

c **(95)** On his return from Tabūk, the Holy Prophet forbade Muslims to have any relations with the hypocrites.

be a fine,[a] and they wait for an evil turn of fortune for you. On them is the evil turn. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing. **99**And some of the dwellers of the desert believe in Allah and the Last Day, and consider what they spend and the prayers of the Messenger as bringing them nearer to Allah. Surely they bring them nearer (to Allah); Allah will admit them into His mercy. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Section 13: **The hypocrites**

100 And the foremost, the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them in goodness [b] — Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them Gardens in which rivers flow, abiding therein forever. That is the mighty achievement. **101**And some of the dwellers of the desert around you are hypocrites; and some of the people of Madinah (also) — they persist in hypocrisy. *Y*ou do not know them; We know them.[c] We will punish them twice,[d] then they will be turned back to a severe punishment.

102 And others have acknowledged their faults — they mixed a good deed with another that was evil. It may be that Allah will

***a* (98)** The hypocrites had to contribute something for the sake of appearance; they also paid the *zakāt* so that they might be treated as Muslims.

***b* (100)** In the history of Islam, the word 'Emigrants' (*muhājirīn*) came to signify all those Companions of the Holy Prophet who, having embraced Islam at Makkah, had to flee from their homes either to Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia) or to Madinah. The latter flight, including nearly all the Muslims of Makkah, is known as *the Hijra* or Flight, and the Muslim era dates from it. The word 'Helpers' (*Anṣār*) signifies the Muslims of Madinah who, having accepted Islam before the Flight, gave shelter to those who fled from Makkah. By "those who followed them in goodness" are meant the Muslims who came after the Companions and followed their good deeds.

***c* (101-1)** The insincerity of the heart could not be known to a mortal — it is known only to Allah.

***d* (101-2)** The hypocrites were punished twice in this life. They had to take part in all contributions for the defence of the Muslim community and had to pay the *zakāt*, all this against their conviction and unwillingly. After having suffered all this torment for the sake of being reckoned Muslims, they were ultimately separated from the Muslims, and this exposure to public shame was no doubt a great punishment for them.

turn to them (mercifully). Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[a] **103**Take charity out of their property — *y*ou would cleanse them and purify them thereby — and pray for them. Surely *y*our prayer is a relief to them. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.[b] **104**Do they not know that Allah is He Who accepts repentance from His servants and takes the charity, and that Allah — He is the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful? **105**And say, Work; so Allah will see your work and (so will) His Messenger and the believers. And you will be brought back to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, then He will inform you of what you did. **106**And others are made to await Allah's command, whether He will punish them or turn to them (mercifully). And Allah is Knowing, Wise.[c]

107 And those who built a mosque to cause harm (to Islam) and (to help) disbelief, and to cause disunion among the believers, and a refuge for him who made war against Allah and His Messenger before. And they will certainly swear: We desired nothing but good. And Allah bears witness that they are certainly liars.[d] **108**Never stand in it. Certainly a mosque founded on observance of duty from the first day is more deserving that *y*ou should stand in it. In it are men who love to purify themselves. And Allah loves those who purify themselves.[e] **109** Is he, then, who lays his foundation on duty to Allah and (His) good pleasure better, or he who lays his foundation on the edge of a cracking hollowed bank, so it broke down with him into the Fire of hell? And Allah does not guide the unjust people. **110** The building which they have built will ever

***a* (102)** According to different reports, the number of these men varied from three to ten. They were sincere and acknowledged their fault.

***b* (103)** Because they showed sincerity in confessing their faults, they were dealt with leniently. Their charity was not to be rejected.

***c* (106)** This is generally supposed to refer to three of the believers who held back from the expedition (Bukhari, 64:79, hadith 4418).

***d* (107)** Some hypocrites built a mosque at the instigation of Abu Āmir, with the object of causing harm to that mosque. Abu Āmir, who, after fighting against the Holy Prophet for a long time had fled to Syria after the Battle of Hunain, had written to his friends at Madinah that he was coming with a formidable army to crush the Prophet, and that they should build a mosque for him. But Abu Āmir died in Syria, and the founders desired the Holy Prophet to give it a blessing by his presence, which he was forbidden to do by Divine revelation, and the mosque was demolished.

***e* (108)** The words are general and every mosque raised for the service of Allah may be included in this description.

continue to be a source of disquiet in their hearts, unless their hearts be torn to pieces.[a] And Allah is Knowing, Wise.

Section 14: **The faithful**

111 Surely Allah has bought from the believers their persons and their property — theirs (in return) is the Garden. They fight in Allah's way, so they kill and are killed. It is a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Quran.[b] And who is more faithful to his promise than Allah? Rejoice therefore in your bargain which you have made. And that is the mighty achievement. **112**They who turn (to Allah), who serve (Him), who praise (Him), who fast, who bow down, who prostrate themselves, who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and who keep the limits of Allah — and give good news to the believers.

113 It is not for the Prophet and those who believe to ask forgiveness for those who set up partners (with Allah), even though they should be near relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of the flaming fire.[c] **114**And Abraham's asking

***a* (110)** Their hearts could be torn to pieces by severe regret or by sincere repentance.

***b* (111)** The promise binding on Allah is that Allah will grant the believers His blessings, if they exert themselves with their persons and their property in His way. The Gospels give the same promise: "If you want to be perfect," said Jesus to a wealthy man, "go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matthew, 19:21). To Peter he said: "Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life" (Matthew, 19:29). Moses' teaching contains similar promises. For instance, the promise of "a land flowing with milk and honey" is made conditional on "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy, 6:3–5), which is the same as exerting oneself to the utmost in the way of God with one's person and property.

It should be borne in mind that the words, *they fight in Allah's way*, *so they kill and are killed*, are not a part of the promise, but are expressive of the condition of the Companions, and show that they were true to their promise. The promise to spend one's person and property may be carried out in various ways under different circumstances, and the Companions of the Holy Prophet were as true to this promise during the thirteen years at Makkah as during the ten years at Madinah.

***c* (113)** This verse does not prohibit praying for the forgiveness of the disbelievers in general, but only such disbelievers about whom it became clear that

forgiveness for his sire was only owing to a promise which he had made to him; but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he dissociated himself from him. Surely Abraham was tender-hearted, forbearing. **115**And it is not (attributable to) Allah that He should lead a people astray after He has guided them, so far so that He makes clear to them what they should guard against.[a] Surely Allah is Knower of all things. **116**Surely Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes death. And besides Allah you have no friend nor helper.

117 Certainly Allah has turned in mercy to the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Helpers who followed him in the hour of hardship, after the hearts of a group of them were about to deviate; then He turned to them in mercy.[b] Surely to them He is Compassionate, Merciful; **118**and (He turned in mercy) to the three who were left behind; until the earth, vast as it is, became narrow to them and their souls were also narrowed to them; and they knew that there was no refuge from Allah but in Him. Then He turned to them in mercy that they might turn (to Him). Surely Allah — He is the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.[c]

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they were doomed to the Fire. When the Holy Prophet was asked to pray for the destruction of a people who were fighting against him, he prayed thus: "My Lord, forgive them because they do not know." So long as a man is alive, however hard he may be in his disbelief, it is not forbidden to pray for his forgiveness or guidance. But when he is dead, God will deal with him as He pleases, and He is the most Merciful of all merciful ones. According to a hadith, after all intercessions have taken place, the most Merciful of all will take a handful — and the handful with God is as vast as the heavens and the earth (39:67) — out of hell and throw them into the river of Life, and these would be the people who never did any good (Bukhari, 97:24, hadith 7439). But under this verse the burial service, which is a prayer for forgiveness, is held only for Muslims, and not for those who die in disbelief.

a **(115)** This verse establishes in clear words that Allah never leads a people astray; and how could He lead astray, says the Quran, when He it is Who gives them guidance, and makes clear to them the evils they should guard against?

b **(117)** *Taubah* on the part of Allah means His *turning* to His servant and changing one state to another which is higher than it. Allah's turning mercifully is in relation to the Prophet and those sincere believers who are plainly stated to have followed the Prophet in the hour of difficulty. The group whose hearts were about to deviate is referred to in the next verse.

c **(118)** These were three men from among the *Anṣār*, referred to in v. 106. The words *were left behind* may mean *left behind with respect to the commandment of Allah concerning them,* as v. 106 speaks of them as being "made to await

Section 15: **What the faithful should do**

119 O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah and be with the truthful. **120**It was not proper for the people of Madinah and those round about them of the dwellers of the desert to remain behind the Messenger of Allah, nor to prefer their own lives to his life.[a] That is because neither thirst nor fatigue nor hunger afflicts them in Allah's way, nor do they tread a path which enrages the disbelievers, nor do they cause any harm to an enemy, but a good work is written down for them on account of it. Surely Allah does not waste the reward of the doers of good; **121**nor do they spend anything, small or great, nor do they traverse a valley but it is written down for them, that Allah may reward them for the best of what they did.

122 And the believers should not go forth all together. Why, then, does not a group from every party from among them go forth that they may apply themselves to obtain understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them, that they may be cautious?[b]

Section 16: **The Prophet's great anxiety**

123 O you who believe, fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you and let them find firmness in you.[c] And know that Allah is with those who keep their duty. **124**And whenever a chapter is revealed, there are some of them who say: Which of you has it

Allah's command". They remained cut off from all relations with the Muslims for fifty days. Ka'b ibn Mālik, one of the three men, was a man of importance, and when he received a letter from the king of Ghassān, offering him a position under him if he deserted the Prophet, he burned the letter, showing his contempt for the offer, and gave no reply.

a **(120)** The meaning is that they should neither desire rest for themselves, nor comfort, nor protection, in preference to the Prophet; in other words, they should accompany him in difficulty and distress.

b **(122)** In the midst of the ordinances relating to fighting, the Quran introduces the subject of the preparation of a missionary force, thus showing that this was the greatest necessity of Islam. It was only by means of a missionary effort that truth could be spread, and the ultimate object was not to be lost sight of, even when the community was engaged in a life-and-death struggle against overwhelming forces of the enemy.

c **(123)** Because it was those who were near who persecuted the Muslims. The object was to stop persecution. Muslims must be firm and not yield to them.

strengthened in faith? So as for those who believe, it strengthens them in faith and they rejoice. **125**And as for those in whose hearts is a disease, it adds uncleanness to their uncleanness, and they die while they are disbelievers.[a] **126**Do they not see that they are tried once or twice in every year, yet they do not repent, nor do they become mindful.[b] **127**And whenever a chapter is revealed, they look at one another: Does anyone see you? Then they turn away. Allah has turned away their hearts because they are a people who do not understand.

128 Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; very painful for him is your falling into distress, most concerned (he is) for you, to the believers (he is) compassionate, merciful.[c] **129**But if they turn away, say: Allah is sufficient for me — there is no god but He. On Him do I rely, and He is the Lord of the mighty Throne.

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a **(125)** The uncleanness of their hearts increased with new revelation, because it increased them in stubbornness, and their hearts were more and more hardened against truth. See also 71:6 footnote.

b **(126)** These trials consisted of the expeditions which the Muslims had to undertake every now and then, and in which the hypocrites were distinguished from the true believers.

c **(128)** This is the true picture of the heart which grieved, not for his followers alone, not for one nation or country, but for all humanity. He grieves for the burdens of all, and he is most concerned for the welfare of all. The whole of humanity is meant here because the concluding words refer additionally to the believers. There is a special relation he bears to those who follow him; to them he is, in addition, compassionate and merciful.

Chapter 10

Yūnus Jonah

This chapter makes a brief reference to the Prophet Jonah (v. 98), which gives it its title, to indicate that as the people of Jonah benefited by his warning, so would the Arabs ultimately believe in the Prophet Muhammad. While this chapter asserts the truth of revelation, it also lays stress on the merciful dealing of God with mankind. It tells us that He does not send punishment quickly and that evidence of His mercy is also found in nature. It also refers to the histories of Noah and Moses. This chapter was revealed during the last four years of the Makkan period of the Holy Prophet's life.

Section 1: **Truth of revelation**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Seer.[a] These are the verses of the Book, full of wisdom.[b] **2** Is it a wonder to the people that We have revealed to a man from among themselves: Warn the people and give good news to those who believe that for them is advancement in excellence[c] with their Lord? The disbelievers say: This is surely an obvious enchanter.

3 Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and He is established on the Throne of Power regulating the Affair.[d] There is no intercessor except after

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***a* (1-1)** *Alif, lām, rā* are the three letters which stand at the head of this chapter and chapters 11, 12, 14 and 15, while chapter 13 has *alif, lām, mīm, rā*. The abbreviation is of the same form as *alif, lām, mīm* (see 2:1 footnote), except that *rā* stands for *Rā'i*, meaning the *Seer*, or *arā*, meaning *I see*.

Chapters 10 to 16 all belong to the last four years of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah, and deal with the truth of prophethood with more or less reference to the histories of the earlier prophets, four of them being named after a prophet.

***b* (1-2)** The Book, i.e., the Quran, is called *ḥakīm,* meaning *wise* or *full of wisdom*, because it possesses the quality which discriminates between truth and falsehood and right and wrong, and because it is free from all unsoundness.

***c* (2)** The words "advancement in excellence" may also be translated as *a footing of firmness.*

***d* (3)** For creation in six periods and the Throne of Power, see footnotes

His permission. This is Allah, your Lord, therefore serve Him. Will you not be mindful? **4**To Him is your return, of all (of you). It is the promise of Allah (made) in truth. Surely He produces the first creation, then He reproduces it, that He may reward with equity those who believe and do good. And as for those who disbelieve, for them is a drink of hot water and a painful punishment because they disbelieved.

5 He it is Who made the sun a shining brightness, and the moon a light,[a] and ordained for it stages that you might know the computation of years and the reckoning. Allah did not create this but with truth. He makes the signs clear for a people who know. **6**Surely in the alternation of the night and the day, and what Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, there are signs for a people who keep their duty.[b]

7 Those who do not expect the meeting with Us, and are pleased with this world's life and are satisfied with it, and those who are heedless of Our messages — **8**these, their abode is the Fire because of what they earned. **9**Those who believe and do good, their Lord guides them by their faith;[c] rivers will flow beneath them in Gardens of bliss. **10**Their cry therein will be, Glory be to You, O Allah! — and their greeting, Peace! And the last of their cry will be: Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds![d]

Section 2: **Punishment of rejection**

11 And if Allah were to hasten for people the (consequences of) evil, as they would hasten on the good, their doom would certainly have been decreed for them. But We leave those alone, who

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under 7:54. In regulating the Affair, there is a further reference to the spiritual evolution of man, as stated more clearly elsewhere: "He orders (or regulates) the Affair from the heaven to the earth" (32:5). For intercession, see 2:255 footnote 1.

a **(5)** The moon is here called *nūr* because its light is borrowed, as contrasted with the sun which is called here *ḍiyā*'.

b **(6)** The whole of creation is, despite its variety, subject to one law, and clearly bears witness to the unity of its Maker. And just as the visible universe is subject to law, there is also a law working in the spiritual world.

c **(9)** The light of faith, which is even in this life a guiding principle of man's actions, will assume a more palpable form in the life after death. Compare 57:12, where it is called the light running, or gleaming, before them.

d **(10)** This is the Muslim paradise, and this description is sufficient to belie the allegation that the Muslim concept of paradise is characterized by sensuality.

have no hope of meeting with Us, in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on.[a] **12**And when affliction touches man, he calls on Us, whether lying on his side or sitting or standing; but, when We remove his affliction from him, he passes on as though he had never called on Us on account of an affliction that touched him. Thus what they do is made to seem good to the extravagant. **13**And certainly We destroyed generations before you when they did wrong, and their messengers came to them with clear arguments, yet they would not believe. Thus do We recompense the guilty people. **14**Then We made you rulers in the land after them, so that We might see how you act.

15 And when Our clear messages are recited to them, those who have no hope of meeting with Us say: Bring a Quran other than this or change it.[b] Say: It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I follow only what is revealed to me. Indeed I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a terrible day.[c] **16**Say: If Allah had desired, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you. I have lived among you a lifetime before it. Do you not then understand?[d] **17**Who is then more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah or calls His messages a lie? Surely the guilty never succeed.

18 And they serve besides Allah that which can neither harm them nor benefit them, and they say: These are our intercessors

a **(11)** People desire and pray for good things to be hastened on to them, and they are hastened on, but in His merciful dealing God does not hasten on the consequences of evil, so that people may repent and escape those consequences.

b **(15-1)** They desire a revelation which should not condemn their evil ways and their idol-worship, nor contain any threats of their coming doom.

c **(15-2)** These words show how true the Holy Prophet himself was to revelation, translating every one of its precepts into practice.

d **(16)** The Holy Prophet's truthfulness and honesty before he received the Divine revelation were undisputed, and he had earned such renown for these qualities that he was known as *al-Amīn*, i.e., *the Faithful one*, or *the Truthful one*. If, as they admitted, he had never told a lie in his lifetime, even for the sake of a personal advantage, how could he, now that he had passed the age of youth, speak falsely, and that to his own detriment? He was not the gainer, but a sufferer thereby, on account of the persecution which his preaching had brought about for him. Moreover, a man who had so long refrained from showing any interest in their lives and their modes of worship, and had all but lived the silent life of a recluse among them, could not, of his own accord, be imagined to have suddenly changed the course of his life.

with Allah. Say: Would you inform Allah of what He does not know in the heavens and the earth? Glory be to Him, and supremely exalted is He above what they set up as partners (with Him)! **19**And (all) people are but a single nation, then they disagree. And if a word had not already gone forth from *y*our Lord, the matter would have certainly been decided between them regarding that in which they disagree.[a] **20**And they say: Why is not a sign sent to him from his Lord? Say: The unseen is only for Allah, so wait; I too am waiting along with you.[b]

Section 3: **Merciful dealing**

21 And when We make people taste of mercy after an affliction touches them — lo! — they devise plans against Our messages. Say: Allah is quicker to plan. Surely Our messengers write down what you plan. **22**He it is Who makes you travel by land and sea; until, when you are in the ships, and they sail on with them in a pleasant breeze, and they rejoice at it, a violent wind overtakes them and waves surge in on them from all sides, and they think they are surrounded. Then they pray to Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience: If You deliver us from this, we will certainly be from among the grateful ones. **23**But when He delivers them — lo! — they are unjustly rebellious in the earth. O people, your rebellion is against yourselves — a provision (only) of this world's life. Then to Us is your return, so We shall inform you of what you did.

24 The likeness of this world's life is only as water which We send down from the clouds, then the vegetation of the earth, of which people and cattle eat, grows luxuriantly thereby; until when the earth puts on its golden attire and it becomes adorned, and its people think that they are masters of it, Our command comes to it, by night or by day, so We render it as reaped seed-produce, as though it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We make clear the messages for a people who reflect.

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a **(19)** The *word* that had gone forth is referred to in many places: "And they say: When will this promise come to pass, if you are truthful? Say: Maybe something of what you seek to hasten has drawn near to you" (27:71–72). And again: "Say: You have the appointment of a day which you cannot postpone by an hour, nor bring it forward" (34:30).

b **(20)** It is clear from the context that their demand is for the punishment with which they are threatened, because they would recognize no other sign; they are told to *wait* for the sign which would undoubtedly come.

25 And Allah invites to the abode of peace, and guides whom He pleases to the right path.[a] **26**For those who do good is good (reward) and more (than this).[b] Neither darkness nor disgrace will cover their faces. These are the owners of the Garden; in it they will abide. **27**And those who earn evil, the punishment of an evil is the like of it, and humiliation will cover them — they will have none to protect them from Allah — as if their faces had been covered with slices of the dense darkness of night. These are the companions of the Fire; in it they will abide.

28 And on the day when We gather them all together, then We shall say to those who set up partners (with Allah): Stay where you are, you and your associate-gods. Then We shall separate them from one another, and their associate-gods will say: It was not us that you served. **29**So Allah is sufficient as a witness between us and you that we were quite unaware of your serving (us). **30**There will every soul become acquainted with what it did before, and they will be brought back to Allah, their true Patron, and what they devised will escape from them.

Section 4: **Uniqueness of Divine gifts**

31 Say: Who gives you sustenance from the heaven and the earth, or who controls the hearing and the sight, and who brings forth the living from the dead, and brings forth the dead from the living? And who regulates the affair? They will say: Allah. Say then: Will you not then guard against evil? **32**Such then is Allah, your true Lord. And what is there after the truth but error? How then are you turned away (from truth)! **33**Thus does the word of *y*our Lord prove true against those who transgress that they do not believe.[c]

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a **(25)** This is another description of the Muslim paradise, which is called *dar al-salām*, or *the abode of peace*. The word *salām* in *dar al-salām* is from the same root as *Islām*. Islam, in fact, makes even this world an abode of peace for a true Muslim; he makes his peace with his Lord, and he lives at peace with his fellow beings. The peace of the next life is, in fact, a continuation of the peace of mind which a Muslim finds in this very life.

b **(26)** Throughout the Quran the reward of virtue is spoken of as being much more than actual recompense, while evil is either spoken of as being forgiven or as being punished only with a like punishment. See 42:25–26 and 6:160.

c **(33)** The *word* refers to the fact that their disbelief is a result of their transgression.

34 Say: Is there anyone among your associate-gods who produces the first creation, then reproduces it? Say: Allah produces the first creation, then He reproduces it. How are you then turned away (from truth)! **35**Say: Is there any of your associate-gods who guides to the Truth? Say: Allah guides to the Truth. Is He then Who guides to the Truth more worthy to be followed, or he who cannot find the way unless he is guided? What is the matter with you? How do you judge? **36**And most of them follow only conjecture. Surely conjecture will not avail at all against the Truth. Truly Allah is Knower of what they do.

37 And this Quran is not such as could be forged by those besides Allah, but it is a verification of what is before it and a clear explanation of the Book, there is no doubt in it, from the Lord of the worlds.[a] **38**Or say they: He has forged it? Say: Then bring a chapter like it, and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful. **39**But they reject that whose knowledge they cannot encompass and whose final sequel has not yet come to them.[b] Even thus did those before them reject; then see what was the end of the wrongdoers. **40**And some of them believe in it, and some of them do not believe in it. And *y*our Lord best knows the mischief-makers.

Section 5: **The guilty and their punishment**

41 And if they reject *y*ou, say: My work is for me and your work for you. You are clear of what I do and I am clear of what you do. **42**And some of them listen to *y*ou. But can *y*ou make the deaf to hear, though they will not understand? **43**And some of them look at *y*ou. But can *y*ou show the way to the blind, though they will not see? [c] **44**Surely Allah does not wrong people in the least, but people wrong themselves.

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a **(37)** The Quran explains in clear words many of the most important principles of religion which are left ambiguous or obscure in the previous books. For instance, the Bible is obscure on the important principle of resurrection or life after death. Similarly the attributes of the Divine Being are not explained in clear words and the result is the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ. The Quran fully explains all such points and finally settles all these questions.

b **(39)** The final sequel is the consequence of the rejection of the Truth.

c **(43)** Compare 7:179: "They have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear."

45 And on the day when He will gather them, as though they had not stayed but an hour of the day, they will recognize one another. They perish indeed who reject the meeting with Allah, and they do not follow the right way. **46**And if We show *y*ou something of what We promise them, or cause *y*ou to die (before that), yet to Us is their return, and Allah is Witness to what they do.[a] **47**And for every nation there is a messenger. So when their messenger comes, the matter is decided between them with justice, and they are not wronged.[b]

48 And they say: When will this promise be fulfilled, if you are truthful? **49**Say: I do not control for myself any harm, or any benefit, except what Allah pleases.[c] Every nation has a term. When their term comes, they cannot postpone it an hour, nor bring it forward.[d] **50**Say: Do you see if His punishment comes to you by night or by day? [e] What (part) of it would the guilty hasten? **51**And when it comes to pass, will you believe in it? What! Now! And you hastened it on! **52**Then will it be said to those who were unjust: Taste abiding punishment; you are not recompensed except for what you earned. **53**And they ask *y*ou: Is that true? Say: Yes, by my Lord, it is surely the Truth! And you will not escape.

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a **(46)** The significance of the words "to Us is their return" is that those who are warned will be dealt with by Allah as they deserve, and the warning will prove true. It is no concern of theirs whether the Prophet lives to punish them with his own hands or that punishment is executed by Allah in some other way.

b **(47)** Compare 35:24: "And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them." Humanity will always be under the deepest obligation to the Holy Prophet for this broad humanitarian principle. By "between them" must be understood the messenger and those who charge him with falsehood.

c **(49-1)** These are not the words which a pretender would utter but are those of an honest man who, without assuming any personal pretensions, preaches truth in all sincerity. The Holy Prophet is repeatedly made to disclaim any control of good and evil, so that he offers no low temptation to his followers. Truth must be accepted for its own sake, not for any hope of worldly gain or fear of worldly loss.

d **(49-2)** The verse does not teach fatalism. It lays down a truth which no historian can deny. To every nation, as to every individual, is granted a term of life, and nations live and die like individuals.

e **(50)** The coming of the doom by night or by day signifies its coming at a time when people are engaged in their revelries or occupied with their business transactions, so as to be utterly inattentive to the real values of life.

Section 6: **Mercy takes precedence over punishment**

54 And if every soul that has done wrong had all that is in the earth, it would offer it for ransom. And they will manifest regret when they see the punishment. And it will be decided between them with justice, and they will not be wronged. **55**Now surely whatever is in the heavens and the earth is Allah's. Now surely Allah's promise is true, but most of them do not know. **56**He gives life and causes death, and to Him you will be returned.

57 O people, an admonition has indeed come to you from your Lord and a healing for what is in the hearts; and a guidance and a mercy for the believers.[a] **58**Say: In the grace of Allah and in His mercy, in that they should rejoice. It is better than what they hoard. **59**Say: Do you see the sustenance that Allah has sent down for you, then you make (a part) of it unlawful and (a part) lawful? Say: Has Allah commanded you or do you forge a lie against Allah?[b] **60**And what do those think who forge lies against Allah of the day of Resurrection? Surely Allah is Bountiful to people, but most of them do not give thanks.

Section 7: **Good news for the faithful**

61 And *y*ou are not (engaged) in any matter nor do *y*ou recite concerning it any portion of the Quran, and you do no work, but We are witness of you when you are engaged in it. And not the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven is hidden from *y*our Lord, nor anything less than that nor greater, but it is (all) in a clear book.[c]

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a **(57)** They demanded punishment again and again, but they are told that Allah has sent to them that in which they will find a healing and a guidance and a mercy for them, viz., the Quran. Compare 29:51, where, in answer to a demand for a sign which should destroy them, the disbelievers are told: "Is it not enough for them that We have revealed to you (O Prophet) the Book which is recited to them? Surely there is mercy in this and a reminder for a people who believe."

b **(59)** Just as Allah gave them the means of their physical sustenance, He has also sent His grace and mercy for their spiritual welfare through revelation. Yet they deprive themselves of the spiritual sustenance as if it were unlawful. Or the reference may be to their declaring certain things to be unlawful for them out of reverence for their idols.

c **(61)** The clear book mentioned here is not, of course, a collection of written or printed sheets bound together. It is the book of the Divine law which makes every deed, good or evil, great or small, bring its recompense.

62 Now surely the friends of Allah, they have no fear nor do they grieve [a] — **63**those who believe and keep their duty. **64**For them is good news [b] in this world's life and in the Hereafter. There is no changing the words of Allah.[c] That is the mighty achievement.

65 And do not let their speech grieve *y*ou. Surely might belongs wholly to Allah. He is the Hearer, the Knower. **66**Now, surely, whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's. And what do follow those who call on associate-gods besides Allah? They follow nothing but conjecture, and they only lie. **67**He it is Who made for you the night that you might rest therein and the day giving light. Surely there are signs in this for a people who hear. **68**They say: Allah has taken a son (to Himself). Glory be to Him! He is the Self-sufficient. His is what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. You have no authority for this. Do you say against Allah what you do not know? **69**Say: Those who forge a lie against Allah will not succeed. **70**A little enjoyment in this world, then to Us is their return, then We shall make them taste severe punishment because they disbelieved.

Section 8: **Noah and Moses**

71 And recite to them the story of Noah, when he said to his people: My people, if my staying (here) and my reminding (you) by the messages of Allah is hard on you, on Allah do I rely; so decide upon your course of action and (gather) your associates.

***a* (62)** The friends of Allah are those who help the Divine cause and invite people to faith in God. They attain to that spiritual height where fear and grief are unknown. There is also a prophecy of the ultimate triumph of Truth, for when a man attains his object, all his fear is gone and he no more grieves for the sacrifices he has made.

***b* (64-1)** The Holy Prophet said: "There has remained nothing of prophethood except *mubashsharāt*." Asked what is meant by *mubashsharāt*, he replied, "*Good visions*" (Bukhari, 91:5, hadith 6990). Elsewhere *good visions* are said to be a part of prophethood (Bukhari, 91:4, hadith 6987–6989), which shows that, as the prophets were informed of the triumph of Truth, so will their followers be given this good news in their visions. The upholders of the Divine cause, we are told, will not only be successful, they will also receive the good news of their ultimate triumph in good visions.

***c* (64-2)** The *words of Allah* here signify the *prophecies*. It is the prophecy of the good reward for the faithful that is mentioned immediately before these words, and the meaning of there being no change is that the prophetic word must be fulfilled; compare similar words used in 6:34, 6:115 and 18:27.

Then do not let your course of action be dubious to you, so have it executed against me and give me no respite.[a] **72**But if you turn back, I ask for no reward from you. My reward is only with Allah, and I am commanded to be of those who submit.

73 But they rejected him, so We delivered him and those with him in the ark, and We made them rulers and drowned those who rejected Our messages. See, then, what was the end of those who were warned. **74**Then after him We sent messengers to their people. They came to them with clear arguments, but they would not believe what they had rejected before. Thus do We seal the hearts of those who exceed the limits.[b]

75 Then after them We sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his chiefs with Our signs, but they were arrogant, and they were a guilty people. **76**So when the truth came to them from Us, they said: This is surely clear enchantment! **77**Moses said: Do you say (this) of the truth when it has come to you? Is it enchantment? And the enchanters never succeed. **78**They said: Have *y*ou come to us to turn us away from what we found our fathers following, and (that) greatness in the land may be for you two? And we are not going to believe in you.

79 And Pharaoh said: Bring to me every skilful enchanter. **80**So when the enchanters came, Moses said to them: Throw down what you are going to throw. **81**So when they had thrown down, Moses said: What you have brought is deception. Surely Allah will make it null. Surely Allah does not allow the work of mischief-makers to thrive. **82**And Allah will establish the truth by His words, though the guilty dislike (it).

Section 9: **End of opposition to Moses**

83 But, on account of the fear of Pharaoh and their chiefs

***a* (71)** The challenge of Noah to his opponents was, in fact, being reproduced now as a challenge to the opponents of the Holy Prophet. And these opponents did, in fact, decide upon their course of action in their great council hall, perhaps a year or two later, and surrounded the Prophet's house in accordance with that decision. But the Prophet escaped unnoticed from among them and they were unable to lay their hands on him.

***b* (74)** They do not ponder over the truth, but, having rejected once, go on opposing its progress without reflecting on it. This condition is described as *the sealing of the heart*, because the heart ceases to reflect.

persecuting them, none believed in Moses except a few of his people.[a] And Pharaoh was truly high-handed in the land; and surely he was one committing excesses. **84**And Moses said: My people, if you believe in Allah, then rely on Him if you submit (to Him). **85**They said: On Allah we rely; our Lord, do not make us a trial for the unjust people. **86**And deliver us by Your mercy from the disbelieving people.

87 And We revealed to Moses and his brother: Take for your people houses to abide in Egypt and make your houses places of worship[b] and keep up prayer. And give good news to the believers. **88**And Moses said: Our Lord, surely You have given Pharaoh and his chiefs finery and riches in this world's life, our Lord, that they may lead (people) astray from Your way.[c] Our Lord, destroy their riches and harden their hearts, so that they do not believe till they see the painful punishment.[d] **89**He said: Your prayer is accepted; so continue in the right way and do not follow the path of those who do not know.

90 And We brought the Children of Israel across the sea. Then Pharaoh and his armies followed them for oppression and tyranny, till, when drowning overtook him, he said: I believe that there is no god but He in Whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit.[e] **91**What! Now! And indeed before (this) *y*ou disobeyed and *y*ou were a mischief-maker! **92**But this day We shall save *y*ou in *y*our body that *y*ou may be a sign to those after *y*ou. And surely most of the people are heedless of Our signs.[f]

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a **(83)** The Israelites believed in Moses, as the verses that follow show. By *his people*, therefore, are meant Pharaoh's wife (66:11) and a believer (40:28).

b **(87)** The *qiblah* is that facing which one prays, and therefore it indicates *a place of worship*. The Israelites were obliged to pray in their houses because they did not enjoy full religious liberty in Egypt and had no public places of worship.

c **(88-1)** The significance is not that God had granted them riches to mislead people, but that this was the end for which they used their riches.

d **(88-2)** Pharaoh and his people did not care for either arguments or signs. Moses therefore now prays for their punishment.

e **(90)** In the agonies of death, even pronounced atheists have sometimes recognized the existence of God.

f **(92)** That the body was really cast ashore, though the Bible does not mention it, is clear from the fact that the body of Rameses II, who is regarded as

Section 10: **Those who heed warning will benefit**

93 And certainly We lodged the Children of Israel in a goodly abode and provided them with good things. Then they did not differ till the knowledge came to them.[a] Surely *y*our Lord will judge between them on the day of Resurrection in that in which they differed. **94**But if *y*ou are in doubt as to what We have revealed to *y*ou, ask those who read the Book before *y*ou.[b] Certainly the Truth has come to *y*ou from *y*our Lord, so do not be one of the doubters, **95**nor be of those who reject the messages of Allah, (for) then *y*ou will be from among the losers. **96**Surely those against whom the word of *y*our Lord has proved true will not believe, **97**though every sign should come to them, till they see the painful punishment.

98 And why was there not a town which believed, so that their belief should have benefited them, but the people of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the punishment of disgrace in this world's life, and We gave them provision for a while.[c] **99**And if *y*our Lord had pleased, all those who are in the earth would have believed, all of them. Will *y*ou then force people till

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the Pharaoh of Moses, has been discovered as preserved among the mummies in Egypt. This is another instance of the insufficiency of the Bible narrative and of the truth of the Quranic statement where it supplements the Bible. The discovery now made could not have been known to the Holy Prophet; it was not known to any person in the world till very recently.

a **(93)** This may be a prophetical announcement as to the Jewish attitude towards the Prophet Muhammad later on when he fled to Madinah.

b **(94)** The person addressed in the Quran in the singular form is not always the Prophet but often the reader, as here. Nor do the words *revealed to you* (in the singular) show that the Prophet is meant, for the Quran is in many places spoken of as being revealed to all the people (see 2:136, 21:10). Verse 104 makes it clear that the reader is addressed: "Say: O people, if you are in doubt as to my religion". Throughout the Quran the Holy Prophet appears as having the greatest certainty about the word which was revealed to him, so much so that he never entertained the slightest doubt about the truth of the promises of future success and triumph. In the very next verse the words are, *nor be of those who reject the messages of Allah*, which shows clearly that it is the Prophet's opponents who are addressed here. The words "ask those who read the Book before you" mean: ask them whether previous revelation does not contain clear prophecies of the advent of such a Prophet.

c **(98)** Jonah bears a resemblance to the Holy Prophet in that his people benefited by the warning, as did the Arabs by the warning of the Prophet, though after much opposition. Jonah is thus the type of a prophet whose people were dealt with mercifully.

they are believers?[a] **100**And it is not for any soul to believe except by Allah's permission. And He casts uncleanness on those who will not understand.[b]

101 Say: Look at what is in the heavens and the earth! And signs and warners do not avail a people who do not believe. **102**What do they wait for, then, but the like of the days of those who passed away before them? Say: Wait then; I too am waiting along with you. **103**Then We deliver Our messengers and those who believe — even so (now); it is binding on Us to deliver the believers.

Section 11: **Divine Judgment**

104 Say: O people, if you are in doubt as to my religion, (know that) I do not serve those whom you serve besides Allah, but I serve Allah, Who causes you to die; and I am commanded to be one of the believers, **105**and that *y*ou set *y*ourself for the religion, being upright; and do not be of those who set up partners (with Allah). **106**Nor call besides Allah on that which can neither benefit *y*ou nor harm *y*ou; for if *y*ou do, *y*ou shall then be of the unjust. **107**And if Allah afflicts *y*ou with harm, there is none to remove it but He; and if He intends good to *y*ou, there is none to repel His grace. He brings it to whom He pleases of His servants. And He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

108 Say: O people, the Truth has indeed come to you from your Lord; so whoever goes aright, goes aright only for the good of his own soul; and whoever goes astray, goes astray only to its detriment. And I am not a custodian over you. **109**And follow what is revealed to *y*ou and be patient till Allah give judgment, and He is the Best of the judges.

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a **(99)** Compare 2:256: "There is no compulsion in religion". The reference is to the great zeal of the Holy Prophet and his over-exerting himself in preaching the Truth: "Then perhaps you will kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement" (18:6). (*Editor's Note:* The Quran tells us here that it is in the natural order of things that while some people believe, others do not, and no human being can or should apply compulsion to others in this regard.)

b **(100)** Those who refuse to understand the truth will find uncleanness cast on them. The word *rijs* ("uncleanness") also means *punishment*, and the meaning, in that case, is that those who care not for the warning must receive the punishment.

Chapter 11

Hūd

The history of the Prophet *Hūd* is referred to in this chapter. While the last chapter dealt mostly with abstract questions relating to the truth of revelation, this chapter illustrates the truth of those questions by referring to the histories of former prophets. Thus it deals with the histories of Noah, Hūd, Sālih, Abraham, Lot and Shuaib. A cruel and persecuting enemy is warned of the fate that befell previous people. This chapter was revealed during the last four years of the period of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah.

Section 1: **A warning**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Seer. A Book, whose verses are characterized by wisdom, then they are made plain, from One Wise, Aware: **2**that you should serve none but Allah. Surely I am to you from Him a warner and a giver of good news. **3**And ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him. He will provide you with a goodly provision to an appointed term, and will bestow His grace on every one endowed with grace.[a] And if you turn away, I fear for you the punishment of a great day. **4**To Allah is your return, and He is Powerful over all things. **5**Now surely they cover up their breasts to conceal (their enmity) from Him. Now surely, when they put their garments as a covering,[b] He knows what they hide and what they make public. Surely He is Knower of what is in the breasts.

Part 12

6 And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it, and He knows its abode and its repository. All is in a clear record. **7**And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods; and His Throne of Power is ever on water [c] that He

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a **(3)** *One endowed with grace* here is the possessor of spiritual blessings in addition to the material benefits spoken of in the preceding words.

b **(5)** This expression indicates their trying not to see or hear, or holding back from lending an ear, or it is an allusion to their running away.

c **(7-1)** For the meaning of *'arsh* or Throne of Power see 7:54 footnote 2. The great power of God which is manifested in the creation of man is connected

might manifest (the good qualities in) you, whoever of you is best in deeds.[a] And if *y*ou say, You shall surely be raised up after death, those who disbelieve say: This is nothing but clear deceit. **8**And if We delay for them the punishment for a stated period, they will certainly say: What prevents it? Now surely on the day when it will come to them, it will not be averted from them, and what they mocked at will beset them.

Section 2: **Truth of revelation**

9 And if We make man taste mercy from Us, then withdraw it from him, he is surely despairing, ungrateful. **10**And if We make him taste a favour after distress has afflicted him, he says: The evils are gone away from me. Certainly he is exultant, boastful, **11**except those who are patient and do good. For them is forgiveness and a great reward.

12 Then, may it be that *y*ou will give up part of what is revealed to *y*ou and *y*our heart will be distressed by it, because they say: Why has not a treasure been sent down for him or an angel come with him?[b] *Y*ou are only a warner. And Allah is in charge of all things. **13**Or, say they: He has forged it. Say: Then bring ten forged chapters like it, and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful.[c] **14**But if they do not answer you, then know that it is

with water because physical life grows out of water. Similarly, spiritual life grows out of revelation, which is so often compared with rain or water. God's great power has thus been made manifest through water, and hence with the creation of the heavens and the earth is mentioned the fact that God's Throne of Power is ever on the waters. The words that follow make it clearer still.

a **(7-2)** The object of the creation of man and all that has been brought into existence is that the great qualities with which man is endowed should be manifested. But that manifestation, we are told in the words that follow, takes place not in this life but in the life after death.

b **(12)** This passage does not signify that the Prophet intended to give up any part of the revelation; on the other hand, it is a strong statement indicating that he could not do it. It is a peculiar use of the word *la'alla* ("maybe"). When it is intended to show a person's remoteness from a thing, it is said: Maybe he has power to do such a thing.

c **(13)** See also 2:23 and footnote. This challenge is contained in four different chapters of the Quran. The earliest in point of revelation is 17:88: "Say: If people and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others." Then

revealed by Allah's knowledge, and that there is no God but He. Will you then submit?[a]

15 Whoever desires this world's life and its finery — We repay them their deeds in it, and they are not made to suffer loss in it. **16**These are they for whom there is nothing but Fire in the Hereafter. And what they work in it is fruitless and their deeds are futile.[b] **17**Is he then (like these) who has with him clear proof from his Lord, and a witness from Him recites it, and before it (is) the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy? These believe in it. And whoever of the parties disbelieves in it, the Fire is his promised place. So do not be in doubt about it. Surely it is the truth from *y*our Lord, but most people do not believe.[c]

18 And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah? These will be brought before their Lord, and the witnesses will say:[d] These are they who lied against their Lord. Now surely the curse of Allah is on the wrongdoers, **19**who hinder (people) from the path of Allah and desire to make it crooked. And they are

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in the verse above, the demand is reduced to ten chapters. Lastly, in 10:38 and 2:23, they are challenged to produce a single chapter like the Quran. Another point worth noting is that, while in 17:88 people and jinn are challenged, in 2:23 the word *shuhadā',* which means *helpers, leaders* or their *great* or *learned men*, is substituted for *jinn*, thus showing that *jinn* in 17:88 are only human beings.

a **(14)** If the false gods or the leaders do not answer their devotees when they call on them to assist them in producing a like of the Quran, then at least no doubt should be left in their minds that the Quran is not the work of the Prophet, but a revelation from the Divine Being.

b **(16)** That is, their deeds will not result in any good to them.

c **(17)** *He who has with him clear proof from his Lord* applies to every believer in the truth of the Quran; the words *these believe in it,* occurring further on, make this clear. The *witness from Allah,* who recites it, is the Holy Prophet, who is called a witness elsewhere, as being an exemplar for the believers. Besides being a clear proof in itself, the Quran has a further evidence of its truth in the book of Moses, which is, therefore, called a guide and a mercy, because it contains clear prophecies of the truth of the Prophet. The meaning of the whole passage is: He who, being a believer in the truth of the Quran, has clear proof from his Lord, and who has an exemplar for him in the person of the Holy Prophet, and has additional testimony of his truth in the book of Moses, is not like him who loves this world and cares not for the Truth. The latter statement, being included in the previous verses, is omitted here.

d **(18)** The witnesses are, according to some, *the angels*; according to others, *the prophets* — and this is corroborated by 4:41; according to still others, *the believers*.

disbelievers in the Hereafter. [20]These will not escape in the earth,[a] nor do they have guardians besides Allah. The punishment will be doubled for them. They could not bear to hear,[b] and they did not see. [21]These are they who have lost their souls, and what they forged is gone from them. [22]Truly in the Hereafter they are the greatest losers.

23 Surely those who believe and do good and humble themselves before their Lord, these are the owners of the Garden; in it they will abide. [24]The likeness of the two parties is as the blind and the deaf, and the seer and the hearer. Are they equal in condition? Will you not then be mindful?

Section 3: **History of Noah**

25 And certainly We sent Noah to his people (saying): Surely I am a plain warner to you, [26]to serve none but Allah. Indeed I fear for you the punishment of a painful day. [27]But the chiefs of his people who disbelieved said: We do not see *y*ou but (as) a mortal like us, nor do we see that any follow *y*ou but those who are the lowest of us at first thought. Nor do we see in you any superiority over us; no, we think you to be liars.

28 He said: My people, do you see if I have with me clear proof from my Lord, and He has granted me mercy from Himself and it has been made obscure to you? Can we compel you to (accept) it while you dislike it? [29]And, my people, I do not ask you for wealth (in return) for it. My reward is only with Allah, and I am not going to drive away those who believe. Surely they will meet their Lord, but I see you a people who are ignorant. [30]And, my people, who will help me against Allah, if I drive them away? Will you not then be mindful? [31]And I do not say to you that I have the treasures of Allah, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I say that I am an angel. Nor do I say about those whom your eyes scorn that Allah will not grant them (any) good — Allah knows best what is in their souls — for then indeed I should be of the wrongdoers.

32 They said: Noah, indeed *y*ou have disputed with us and prolonged dispute with us, so bring upon us what *y*ou threaten us

a **(20-1)** They would not escape the punishment, if Allah intended to punish them in this world.

b **(20-2)** They could not bear even to hear what the Prophet said.

with, if *y*ou are truthful. **33**He said: Only Allah will bring it on you, if He please, and you will not escape; **34**and my advice will not benefit you, if I intend to give you good advice, if Allah intends to destroy you. He is your Lord; and to Him you will be brought back.

35 Or do they say: He has forged it? Say: If I have forged it, on me is my guilt; and I am free of what you are guilty of.[a]

Section 4: **History of Noah**

36 And it was revealed to Noah: None of *y*our people will believe except those who have already believed, so do not grieve at what they do; **37**and make the ark under Our eyes and Our revelation, and do not speak to Me on behalf of those who are unjust. Surely they will be drowned.

38 And he began to make the ark. And whenever the chiefs of his people passed by him, they laughed at him. He said: If you laugh at us, surely we, too, laugh at you as you laugh (at us).[b] **39**So you shall know who it is on whom will come a punishment which will disgrace him, and on whom a lasting punishment will fall.

40 At length when Our command came and water gushed forth from the valley,[c] We said: Carry in it two of all things, a pair,[d] and *y*our own family — except those against whom the word has already gone forth — and those who believe. And only a few believed with him. **41**And he said: Embark in it, in the name of Allah be its sailing and its anchoring. Surely my Lord is Forgiving, Merciful. **42**And it moved on with them amid

***a* (35)** The change shows positively that the disbelievers of Makkah are meant, and the reference is to their calling the Quran a forgery. This shows that the histories of the prophets are referred to in the Quran as a warning for the Holy Prophet's opponents.

***b* (38)** The *laughing* of the righteous at the wicked is not to be taken literally. You laugh at a thing to show your contempt for it; just as the disbelieving people showed their contempt for the making of the ark, the believer in Divine promise shows his contempt for their opposition and their plans to destroy him.

***c* (40-1)** *Fār al-tannūr* has often been translated as *the oven poured forth water* or *the oven boiled* or *the earth's surface boiled up*. But the meaning of *fāra,* which suits the context here, is not of boiling, but of water spouting forth, and that of *tannūr* applicable here is not *oven* but *a place where the water of a valley collects.*

***d* (40-2)** By *all things* are meant all things needed by Noah, and not all things existing in the world, which was too extensive for Noah to travel over.

waves like mountains.[a] And Noah called out to his son, who was apart: My son, embark with us and do not be with the disbelievers. **43**He said: I will take refuge on a mountain that will save me from the water. He said: There is none safe today from Allah's command, but he on whom He has mercy. And a wave intervened between them, so he was among the drowned.

44 And it was said: O earth, swallow *y*our water, and O cloud, clear away. And the water was made to subside, and the affair was decided, and it rested on the Jūdī,[b] and it was said: Away with the wrongdoing people! **45**And Noah cried to his Lord and said: My Lord, surely my son is of my family, and Your promise is true, and You are the most just of the judges. **46**He said: O Noah, he is not of *y*our family; he is (an embodiment of) unrighteous conduct.[c] So do not ask of Me that of which *y*ou have no knowledge. I admonish *y*ou so *y*ou may not be of the ignorant ones. **47**He said: My Lord, I seek refuge in You from asking of You that of which I have no knowledge. And unless You forgive me and have mercy on me, I shall be among the losers. **48**It was said: O Noah, descend with peace from Us and blessing on *y*ou and on nations (springing) from those with *y*ou. And there are nations whom We afford provisions, then a painful punishment from Us afflicts them.

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a **(42)** The Quran does not support the story that the deluge covered the whole surface of the earth. On the other hand, it repeatedly speaks of Noah as having been sent to *his people*, i.e., to a single tribe, and according to the Divine law the punishment must have overtaken his people, who not only rejected the truth, but also sought to destroy Noah and his followers. The mention of the water flowing from the valley also shows that it was only a tract of land that was deluged, and not the entire earth. The taking in of a pair of all things does not mean that Noah had travelled over the whole earth and taken a pair of every living animal wherever it could be found. The order is clearly to take in pairs of all those things that he considered necessary for himself and those who were with him in the ark. The Bible narrative, which speaks of God "bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life" (Genesis, 6:17), and then makes Noah collect and lodge in an ark a pair of each of the thousands of animals and birds, cannot be accepted.

b **(44)** The Greek name of this mountain is said to be Gordyoei, being one of those mountains which divide Armenia on the south from Mesopotamia (Iraq).

c **(46)** When it is meant to speak of a person as the very embodiment of a certain quality, he is designated not as the possessor of that quality, but as that quality itself. In 2:177 it is said, literally, *righteousness is the one who believes*, where *righteousness* stands for a person who is an embodiment of righteousness.

49 These are announcements relating to the unseen which We reveal to *y*ou; *y*ou did not know them — (neither) *y*ou nor *y*our people — before this. So be patient. Surely the (good) end is for the dutiful.[a]

Section 5: **History of Hūd**

50 And to Ād (We sent) their brother Hūd.[b] He said: My people, serve Allah, you have no god other than Him. You are only fabricators. **51**My people, I ask of you no reward for it. My reward is only with Him Who created me. Do you not then understand? **52**And, my people, ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him, He will send on you clouds pouring down abundance of rain and add strength to your strength, and do not turn back, guilty.

53 They said: Hūd, *y*ou have brought us no clear argument, and we are not going to desert our gods for *y*our word, and we are not believers in *y*ou. **54**We say nothing but that some of our gods have struck *y*ou with evil. He said: Surely I call Allah to witness, and you should bear witness too, that I am innocent of what you set up (with Allah) **55**besides Him. So scheme against me all together, then give me no respite. **56**Surely I put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no living creature but He grasps it by its forelock. Surely my Lord is on the right path.[c] **57**But if you turn away, then indeed I have delivered to you the message with which I am sent to you. And my Lord will bring another people in your place, and you cannot do Him any harm. Surely my Lord is the Preserver of all things.

58 And when Our commandment came to pass, We delivered Hūd and those who believed with him with mercy from Us; and We delivered them from a hard punishment. **59**And such were Ād. They denied the messages of their Lord, and disobeyed His messengers and followed the bidding of every insolent opposer

***a* (49)** The announcement relating to the unseen is the fate of the opponents of the Holy Prophet as read in Noah's history. The words that follow — *be patient* — are a clear indication, for patient waiting was needed for the fate of the Prophet's opponents, not for anything relating to Noah's history.

***b* (50)** See 7:65 footnote.

***c* (56)** *My Lord is on the right path* signifies that He does not deviate from justice.

(of truth). **60**And they were overtaken by a curse in this world and on the day of Resurrection. Now surely Ād disbelieved in their Lord. Now surely, away with Ād, the people of Hūd!

Section 6: **History of Sālih**

61 And to Thamūd (We sent) their brother Sālih.[a] He said: My people, serve Allah, you have no god other than Him. He brought you forth from the earth and made you dwell in it, so ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him. Surely my Lord is near, answering. **62**They said: Sālih, *y*ou were among us a centre of (our) hopes before this. Do *y*ou forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped? And surely we are in grave doubt about that to which *y*ou call us. **63**He said: My people, do you see if I have clear proof from my Lord and He has granted me mercy from Himself — who will then help me against Allah, if I disobey Him? So you would add to me nothing but perdition. **64**And, my people, this is Allah's she-camel, a sign for you, so leave her to pasture on Allah's earth and do her no harm, or a punishment will soon come upon you.[b] **65**But they hamstrung her, so he said: Enjoy yourselves in your houses for three days. That is a promise not to be belied.

66 So when Our commandment came to pass, We saved Sālih and those who believed with him by mercy from Us from the disgrace of that day. Surely *y*our Lord — He is the Strong, the Mighty. **67**And the cry overtook those who did wrong,[c] so they were motionless bodies in their abodes, **68**as though they had never dwelt in them. Now surely Thamūd disbelieved in their Lord. So away with Thamūd!

Section 7: **Abraham and Lot**

69 And certainly Our messengers came to Abraham with good news.[d] They said: 'Peace!' 'Peace!', said he. And he made no delay

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a **(61)** See 7:73 footnote 1.

b **(64)** See 7:73 footnote 2.

c **(67)** It was an earthquake. See 7:78.

d **(69)** Whether they were angels or men is not made clear here or anywhere else in the Quran. But as they did not partake of food, and the fact that they brought to Abraham news of a son and of the destruction of Lot's people, they are generally looked upon as angels who appeared in the similitude of men.

in bringing a roasted calf. **70**But when he saw that their hands did not reach to it, he mistrusted them and conceived fear of them. They said: Do not fear; we have been sent to Lot's people.

71 And his wife was standing (by), so she wondered.[a] Then We gave her the good news of Isaac, and beyond Isaac, of Jacob.[b] **72**She said: O wonder![c] Shall I bear a son when I am an extremely old woman, and this my husband an extremely old man? This is a wonderful thing indeed! **73**They said: Do *y*ou wonder at Allah's commandment? The mercy of Allah and His blessings be on you, people of the house![d] Surely He is Praised, Glorious.

74 So when fear departed from Abraham and good news came to him, he began to plead with Us for Lot's people. **75**Surely Abraham was forbearing, tender-hearted, oft-returning (to Allah). **76**O Abraham, cease from this. Surely the decree of *y*our Lord has gone forth and a punishment must come to them which cannot be averted.

77 And when Our messengers came to Lot, he was grieved for them, and he was unable to protect them, and said: This is a distressful day!

78 And his people came to him, (as if) driven on towards him, and they were used to the doing of evil deeds before. He said: My people, these are my daughters — they are purer for you; so guard against (the punishment of) Allah and do not disgrace me about

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***a* (71-1)** It is made clear in 51:24–34 that the news of the birth of a son was given to Abraham first. This explains Sarah's wonder. It was after receiving the good news of the birth of a son that Abraham was informed of the destruction of Lot's people. The statement made further on that Sarah was given the good news of the birth of a son is by way of reassurance on her expression of wonder, and to give the further news of a son's son, Jacob.

***b* (71-2)** Compare Genesis 18:10–12. The mention of a son's son (Jacob) was to show that that son should have progeny. The word *warā'* ("beyond") also means a son's son. Elsewhere Jacob is expressly called *nāfilah* (21:72) which means a *grandson*.

***c* (72)** The original words *yā wailatā*, while used to express grief and sorrow, are also used to express wonder.

***d* (73)** *Ahl al-bait* ("people of the house") includes the wife of a person; in fact, it is Abraham's wife who is primarily addressed here. The same phrase in the case of the Holy Prophet (33:33) includes his wives as well as his children.

my guests. Is there not among you any right-minded man?[a] **79**They said: Certainly *y*ou know that we have no claim on *y*our daughters, and *y*ou know what we desire. **80**He said: If only I had the power to repel you! — rather I shall have recourse to a strong support.[b]

81 They said: Lot, we are the messengers of *y*our Lord. They shall not reach *y*ou. So travel with *y*our people for a part of the night — and let none of you turn back — except *y*our wife. Surely whatsoever befalls them shall befall her. Surely their appointed time is the morning. Is not the morning near? **82**So when Our decree came to pass, We turned them upside down, and rained on them stones, as decreed, one after another,[c] **83**marked (for punishment) with *y*our Lord. And it is not far off from the wrongdoers.[d]

Section 8: **History of Shuaib**

84 And to Midian (We sent) their brother Shuaib. He said: My people, serve Allah, you have no god other than Him. And do not give short measure and weight. I see you in prosperity, and I fear for you the punishment of an all-encompassing day. **85**And, my people, give full measure and weight justly, and do not

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***a* (78)** Lot, it appears from Genesis 19:9, was a stranger in the city, and the messengers being strangers, the townsmen would not allow him to keep them. Lot offered his daughters as hostages so that he might be allowed to keep his guests with him, for, according to 15:70, he had not permission to allow any stranger to come under his roof. Another view is that Lot offered his daughters for marriage, as thus he would not be a stranger among them but would be one of them. Some commentators have suggested that Lot did not point to his real daughters, but to women of the tribe, because a prophet would speak of the women of his tribe as his daughters, and in that case he did no more than point to the natural relation of man and woman. The answer of his people seems, however, to relate to his daughters.

***b* (80)** Allah is the strong support to Whom the righteous have recourse when they are in trouble. The particle *au* signifies *or,* as well as *rather.*

***c* (82)** It was a severe earthquake, which so utterly demolished the cities as to turn them upside down. In 15:73 it is called a *rumbling* that precedes an earthquake; see 7:84. The raining down of stones might have been the result of a volcanic eruption which was accompanied by an earthquake.

***d* (83)** The concluding words indicate a reversion to the subject of the punishment of the opponents of the Holy Prophet. *It* refers to the *punishment*.

defraud people of their things, nor act corruptly in the land, making mischief. **86**What remains with Allah is better for you, if you are believers.[a] And I am not a keeper over you.

87 They said: Shuaib, does *y*our prayer enjoin *y*ou that we should give up what our fathers worshipped or that we should not do what we please with regard to our property? So *y*ou are the one who is the forbearing, the right-directing!

88 He said: My people, do you see if I have a clear proof from my Lord and He has given me a goodly sustenance from Himself? And I do not desire to act in opposition to you, in what I forbid you. I desire nothing but reform, so far as I am able. And with none but Allah is the direction of my affair to a right issue. In Him I trust and to Him I turn. **89**And, my people, do not let opposition to me make you guilty so that there may befall you the like of what befell the people of Noah, or the people of Hūd, or the people of Sālih. Nor are the people of Lot far off from you. **90**And ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him. Surely my Lord is Merciful, Loving-kind.

91 They said: Shuaib, we do not understand much of what *y*ou say and surely we see *y*ou to be weak among us. And if it were not for *y*our family, we would surely stone *y*ou, and *y*ou are not strong against us. **92**He said: My people, is my family more esteemed by you than Allah? And you neglect Him as a thing cast behind your backs! Surely my Lord encompasses what you do. **93**And, my people, act according to your ability, I too am acting. You will soon know upon whom will come the punishment, that will disgrace him, and who is a liar. And watch, surely I too am watching with you.

94 And when Our decree came to pass, We delivered Shuaib and those who believed with him by mercy from Us. And the cry overtook those who did wrong, so they were motionless bodies in their abodes, **95**as though they had never dwelt in them. So away with Midian, just as Thamūd perished!

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a **(86)** *Baqiyyat Allāh* would properly signify *that part of man's doing which remains with Allah*, i.e., *the righteous* or *good works, of which the recompense remains*, the word conveying the same significance as *bāqiyāt* in 18:46 and 19:76. But it may also mean *what Allah leaves to you after you have paid the dues of others*.

Section 9: **The wrongdoers and the righteous**

96 And certainly We sent Moses with Our signs and a clear authority, **97**to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they followed the bidding of Pharaoh; and Pharaoh's bidding was not right-directing. **98**He will lead his people on the day of Resurrection, and bring them down to the Fire. And evil the place to which they are brought! **99**And they are followed by a curse in this (world), and on the day of Resurrection. Evil the gift which shall be given!

100 This is an account of the towns which We relate to *y*ou. Of them are some that stand and (others) mown down. **101**And We did not wrong them but they wronged themselves. And their gods whom they called upon besides Allah did not avail them in the least when the decree of *y*our Lord came to pass. And they added to them nothing but ruin. **102**And such is the punishment of *y*our Lord, when He punishes the towns while they are wrongdoers. Surely His punishment is painful, severe. **103**Surely there is a sign in this for him who fears the punishment of the Hereafter. That is a day on which people will be gathered together, and that is a day to be witnessed. **104**And We do not delay it but for an appointed term.

105 On the day when it comes, no soul will speak except by His permission; so (some) of them will be unhappy and (others) happy. **106**Then as for those who are unhappy, they will be in the Fire; for them there will be in it sighing and groaning — **107**abiding in it so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as *y*our Lord please. Surely *y*our Lord is Doer of what He intends.[a]

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a **(107)** This limitation on the duration of abiding in hell — *except as your Lord please* — is given here and in 6:128, showing clearly that the punishment of hell is not everlasting. The next verse states that those in paradise will abide there as long as the heavens and the earth endure, "except as your Lord please", but this statement is immediately followed by another: *A gift never to be cut off*. This shows that in fact there is no limitation upon the eternity of paradise, and the words *except as your Lord please* have been used, in the case of paradise, only to express the unbounded power of the Divine Being and the fact that it is due to God's pleasure that they are there. In the case of hell, however, the words *except as your Lord please* are followed by a statement which corroborates the limitation thus placed, for, *Fa"āl* or Doer, as an attribute of God, indicates that He does even those things which seem impossible to others.

Three times in the Quran (4:169, 33:65, 72:23) abiding in hell for *abad* is mentioned, which is generally considered as meaning *forever*. However, *abad*

[108]And as for those who are made happy, they will be in the Garden abiding in it so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as *y*our Lord please — a gift never to be cut off.[a]

109 So do not be in doubt as to what these (people) worship. They worship only as their fathers worshipped before. And surely We shall pay them in full their due undiminished.

Section 10: **Believers are comforted**

110 And indeed We gave Moses the Book, but differences arose concerning it. And if a word had not already gone forth from *y*our Lord, judgment would have been given between them. And they are surely in a disquieting doubt about it. [111]And *y*our Lord will surely pay back to all their deeds in full. He indeed is Aware of what they do.

112 Continue, then, in the right way as *y*ou are commanded, as also (should) those who turn (to Allah) with *y*ou. And do not be inordinate (O people). Surely He is Seer of what you do. [113]And do not incline to those who do wrong, so that the fire touch you; and you have no protectors besides Allah, then you would not be helped.[b] [114]And keep up prayer at the two ends of the day and in the first hours of the night.[c] Surely good deeds take away evil deeds. This is a reminder for the mindful. [115]And be patient, for surely Allah does not waste the reward of the doers of good.

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signifies *a long time* as well as *time without end.* The Quran makes clear in 78:23 that a long time is meant, as it states there that the disbelievers will remain in hell for *aḥqāb,* i.e., *long years.*

***a* (108)** In accordance with what is said here, that heavenly life is a gift never to be cut off, we have in 15:48: "Nor will they be ejected from there."

***b* (113)** Not only is man forbidden to do any wrong himself, but he should keep himself at a safe distance from wrong and refrain from leaning towards the wrongdoers.

***c* (114)** The times of prayer are clearly indicated here. Of the two ends of the day, the first is the *Fajr*, or the prayer *before sunrise,* and the second includes the *Ẓuhr,* or *the early afternoon,* and the *'Aṣr,* or *the later afternoon,* prayers. In the first hours of the night we have the *Maghrib,* or *the after sunset prayer,* and the *'Ishā',* or the prayer *before going to bed*. The two afternoon prayers and the two after sunset prayers, which are spoken of together, may under exceptional circumstances be said together in each case.

116 Why were there not, then, among the generations before you, those possessing understanding who forbade mischief in the earth except a few among them whom We delivered? And the unjust pursued the enjoyment of plenty, and they were guilty. **117**And *y*our Lord would not destroy towns unjustly, while their people acted well.[a] **118**And if *y*our Lord pleased, He would have made people a single nation.[b] And they do not cease to differ, **119**except those on whom *y*our Lord has mercy; and for this did He create them. And the word of *y*our Lord is fulfilled: I will certainly fill hell with jinn and people, all together.[c]

120 And all We relate to *y*ou from the account of the messengers is to strengthen *y*our heart with it. And in this has come to *y*ou the truth and an admonition and a reminder for the believers. **121**And say to those who do not believe: Act according to your power, surely we too are acting; **122**and wait, surely we too are waiting. **123**And Allah's is the unseen in the heavens and the earth, and to Him the whole affair will be returned. So serve Him and put *y*our trust in Him. And *y*our Lord is not heedless of what you do.

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a **(117)** God does not destroy people unjustly. He destroys them only when they act corruptly and make mischief in the world. He would not destroy them *if they act well,* whatever their beliefs. Most of the commentators take the word *ẓulm* (*injustice* in the word "unjustly") here as meaning *shirk* or setting up partners with God, and the meaning becomes that God would not destroy people, even though they were guilty of *shirk,* provided they *acted well*. The translation in this case would be: *your Lord would not destroy towns for wrong beliefs, while their people acted well*.

b **(118)** God does not force people to one particular belief. He has given them the choice to accept or reject the truth.

c **(119)** Here it is clearly stated that Allah created all human beings to have mercy on them. By His mercy He guides some to the right path, while to others, who go over to evil and make themselves deserving of hell, mercy will come only after suffering. It is by their own hands that they get into distress and difficulty, while Allah has mercy on them in extricating them from it.

The *filling of hell with jinn and people* would be because they went against the ways which Allah had mercifully shown to them. Therefore they must pass through another ordeal, so that they may be purged of evil and made fit for spiritual progress.

Chapter 12

Yūsuf Joseph

This entire chapter gives a continuous account of the history of Joseph. At the beginning and the end it indicates that the purpose is to foretell the ultimate triumph of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the final submission of those who were plotting against his life. It is also prophesied here that the mutual dealings of the Holy Prophet and his enemies would be similar to the dealings of Joseph and his brothers: they would persecute him but he would forgive them when they would ultimately come before him in submission. This chapter was revealed during the last four years of the period of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah.

Section 1: **Joseph's vision**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Seer. These are the verses of the Book that makes manifest. **2**Surely We have revealed it — an Arabic Quran — that you may understand. **3**We narrate to *y*ou the best of narratives,[a] in that We have revealed to *y*ou this Quran, though before this *y*ou were of those who are unaware.[b]

4 When Joseph said to his father: My father, I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon — I saw them making submission to me. **5**He said: My son, do not relate *y*our dream to *y*our brothers, in case they devise a plan against *y*ou. The devil indeed is an open enemy to man. **6**And thus will *y*our Lord choose *y*ou and teach *y*ou the interpretation of sayings, and make His favour complete to *y*ou and to the Children of Jacob, as He made it complete before

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***a* (3-1)** It is called the best narrative because it is the best picture of the dealing of the Quraish with the Holy Prophet, and the Prophet's dealing with them. It was in the very words of Joseph to his brothers — *there is no reproach against you this day* (v. 92) — that the Holy Prophet forgave the people of Makkah all the atrocities they had committed against him.

***b* (3-2)** The Holy Prophet's "unawareness" relates to his own future, of which this chapter gives a clear indication in the incidents of Joseph's life, viz., that he was to be expelled from his home but that his countrymen would ultimately come to him in submission, asking pardon for their faults. But "unawareness" here may also refer to all those things that are related in the Quran, because the Prophet knew nothing of them before revelation.

to *y*our fathers, Abraham and Isaac. Surely *y*our Lord is Knowing, Wise.

Section 2: **Plot against Joseph by his brothers**

7 Surely in Joseph and his brothers there are signs for the inquirers.[a] **8**When they said: Certainly Joseph and his brother [b] are dearer to our father than we, though we are a (strong) company. Surely our father is in clear error — **9**Kill Joseph or banish him to some (other) land, so that your father's regard may be exclusively for you, and after that you may be a righteous people.[c] **10**A speaker among them said: Do not kill Joseph, but, if you are going to do anything, cast him down to the bottom of the well. Some of the travellers may pick him up.

11 They said: Our father, why do *y*ou not trust us with Joseph, and surely we are his sincere well-wishers? **12**Send him with us tomorrow that he may enjoy himself and play, and we shall surely guard him well. **13**He said: Indeed it grieves me that you should take him away and I fear that the wolf may eat him while you are careless of him. **14**They said: If the wolf should eat him while we are so many, we should then certainly be losers.

15 So when they took him away and agreed to put him down at the bottom of the pit, We revealed to him: *Y*ou will certainly inform them of this affair of theirs while they do not realize.[d] **16**And they came to their father at nightfall, weeping. **17**They said: Our father, we went off racing with one another and left Joseph by our goods, so the wolf ate him. And *y*ou will not believe us, though we are truthful. **18**And they came with false blood on his shirt. He said: Indeed, your souls have made it a light matter for you.

a **(7)** By inquirers are meant people who inquired about the Holy Prophet, who was at this time being persecuted most severely by the people of Makkah. They are told in plain words that the story of the Prophet and his opponents was the story of Joseph and his brothers.

b **(8)** Benjamin, his brother by the same mother, is meant here.

c **(9)** The conspiracy of the Quraish against the Holy Prophet is referred to in the Quran in the words: "And when those who disbelieved devised plans against you that they might confine you or kill you or drive you away" (8:30).

d **(15)** The essential difference between the version of this story given in the Bible and the version in the Quran is that while the Bible narrates it as a simple story, the Quran preserves in it the spiritual element.

So patience is best. And Allah is He Whose help is sought against what you describe.[a]

19 And travellers came, and they sent their water-drawer and he let down his bucket. He said: Good news! This is a youth. And they concealed him as an article of merchandise, and Allah knew what they did. **20**And they sold him for a small price, a few pieces of silver, and they showed no desire for him.

Section 3: **Joseph's firmness under temptation**

21 And the Egyptian who bought him said to his wife: Make his stay honourable. Maybe he will be useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son. And thus We established Joseph in the land, and that We might teach him the interpretation of sayings. And Allah has full control over His affair, but most people do not know. **22**And when he attained his maturity, We gave him wisdom and knowledge. And thus do We reward the doers of good.

23 And she in whose house he was, sought to seduce him, and bolted the doors and said: Come. He said: Allah forbid! Surely my Lord made good my abode. The wrongdoers never prosper. **24**And certainly she desired him, and he would have desired her if he had not seen the clear evidence of his Lord. Thus (it was) that We might turn away from him evil and indecency. Surely he was one of Our chosen servants.[b]

25 And they raced with one another to the door, and she tore his shirt from behind, and they met her husband at the door. She said: What is the penalty for one who intends evil to *y*our wife, except imprisonment or a painful punishment? **26**He said: She sought to seduce me. And a witness of her own family bore witness: If his shirt is torn in front, she speaks the truth and he is a liar. **27**And if his shirt is torn from behind, she tells a lie and he is truthful.

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a **(18)** The Quran represents Jacob as doubting from the very first the sincerity of Joseph's brothers, but not so the Bible. Again, according to the Quran, Joseph relates his vision to his father, who is at once apprehensive of the envy of his brothers, if they are apprised of it; but according to the Bible, Jacob himself rebuked Joseph for his dream. Besides several discrepancies, the Bible narrative represents Jacob as an ordinary man, while the Quran represents him as a prophet.

b **(24)** This does not show that Joseph had any desire for her, but that the temptation was so strong that, if he had not been strengthened by great faith in God, he would have fallen a prey to mortal weakness.

28So when he saw his shirt torn from behind, he said: Surely it is an intrigue of you women. Your intrigue is indeed great![a] 29Joseph, turn aside from this. And (my wife), ask forgiveness for *y*our sin. Surely *y*ou are one of the sinful.

Section 4: **Joseph is imprisoned**

30 And women in the city said: The chief's wife seeks to seduce her slave. He has indeed affected her deeply with (his) love. Truly we see her in clear error. 31So when she heard of their scheming,[b] she sent for them and prepared for them a feast, and gave each of them a knife, and said (to Joseph): Come out to them. So when they saw him, they thought him great, and cut their hands (in amazement), and said: Holy Allah! This is not a mortal! This is but a noble angel.[c] 32She said: This is he about whom you blamed me. And certainly I sought to seduce him, but he was firm in self-restraint. And if he does not do what I order him, he shall certainly be imprisoned, and he shall certainly be degraded.

33 He said: My Lord, the prison is dearer to me than that to which they invite me. And if You do not turn away their intrigue from me, I shall yearn towards them and be one of the ignorant. 34So his Lord accepted his prayer and turned away their intrigue from him. Surely He is the Hearer, the Knower. 35Then it occurred to them after they had seen the signs that they should imprison him for a while.[d]

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a **(28)** The vindication of Joseph's character on this occasion, and the production of the evidence of the shirt, are not related in the Bible. The next section proves that Joseph was not cast into prison for being guilty of having committed an outrage against his master's wife.

b **(31-1)** Some think that she knew that certain women had circulated the news with the object of getting a chance to see Joseph.

c **(31-2)** The Egyptians were a superstitious and polytheistic people, and anything strange, or any human being about whom they witnessed anything wonderful, was considered by them to be a god.

d **(35)** There is nothing to show that Joseph was cast into prison on a charge of having committed an outrage on that woman. As he was proved guiltless of that charge, it is very likely that some other accusation was brought against him; and more probably an autocratic ruler needed no excuse for putting an innocent man into prison. By *signs* must be understood the *signs of Joseph's innocence*.

Section 5: **Joseph's preaching in prison**

36 And two youths entered the prison with him. One of them said: I saw myself pressing wine. And the other said: I saw myself carrying bread on my head, from which birds were eating. Inform us of its interpretation; surely we see *y*ou to be from among the doers of good.[a]

37 He said: The food with which you are fed shall not come to you, but I shall inform you of its interpretation before it comes to you. This is from what my Lord has taught me. Surely I have forsaken the religion of a people who do not believe in Allah, and are deniers of the Hereafter. **38**And I follow the religion of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It does not befit us to set up any partner with Allah. This is by Allah's grace upon us and on mankind, but most people do not give thanks. **39**My two fellow-prisoners, are various lords better or Allah the One, the Supreme? **40**You do not serve besides Him but names which you have named, you and your fathers — Allah has sent down no authority for them. Judgment is only Allah's. He has commanded that you serve none but Him. This is the right religion, but most people do not know.

41 My two fellow-prisoners, as for one of you, he will serve wine for his lord to drink; and as for the other, he will be crucified, so that birds will eat from his head. The matter is decreed concerning which you inquired. **42**And he said to him whom he knew would be delivered of the two: Remember me with *y*our lord. But the devil caused him to forget mentioning (it) to his lord, so he remained in the prison a few years.

Section 6: **The King's vision interpreted by Joseph**

43 And the king said: I have seen seven fat cows which seven lean ones devoured, and seven green ears and (seven) others dry. Chiefs, explain to me my dream, if you can interpret the dream. **44**They said: Confused dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams. **45**And of the two, he who had found deliverance and remembered after a long time said: I will inform you of its interpretation, so send me.

***a* (36)** Compare Genesis, ch. 40, which, however, omits Joseph's preaching. The two youths were the butler and the baker.

46 Joseph, truthful one, explain to us seven fat cows which seven lean ones devoured, and seven green ears and (seven) others dry, that I may go back to the people so that they may know. **47**He said: You shall sow for seven years as usual, then what you reap, leave it in its ear, except a little which you eat. **48**Then after that will come seven years of hardship, which will eat away all you have beforehand stored for them, except a little which you have preserved. **49**Then after that will come a year in which people will have rain and in which they will press (grapes).

Section 7: **Joseph cleared of the charges**

50 And the king said: Bring him to me. So when the messenger came to him, he said: Go back to *y*our lord and ask him, what is the case of the women who cut their hands? Surely my Lord knows their intrigue.

51 (The king) said: What was your business when you sought to seduce Joseph? They said: Holy Allah! We knew of no evil on his part. The chief's wife said: Now has the truth come out. I sought to seduce him and he is surely truthful.

52 (Joseph said:) This is that he might know that I have not been unfaithful to him in secret, and that Allah does not guide the plan of the unfaithful.[a] ***53**And I do not call myself sinless; surely (man's) self is apt to command evil, except those on whom my Lord has mercy. Surely my Lord is Forgiving, Merciful.[b]

*Part 13

54 And the king said: Bring him to me, I will choose him for myself. So when he talked with him, he said: Surely *y*ou are in our presence today dignified, trusted. **55**He said: Place me (in authority) over the treasures of the land; surely I am a good keeper, knowing well.

56 And thus did We give to Joseph power in the land — he had mastery in it wherever he liked. We bestow Our mercy on whom

***a* (52)** These are the words of Joseph, who explains his conduct in preferring to remain in prison until his innocence was established.

***b* (53)** When a man addressed Jesus as *good master,* he said: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God" (Mark, 10:18). The righteous never attribute any good to themselves, but attribute all good to the Great Source of goodness — God. Man's self is here called *ammārah,* i.e., *one apt to command evil*. It is the lowest stage in spiritual growth. See also 75:2 and 89:30.

We please, and We do not waste the reward of the doers of good. **57**And certainly the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believe and guard against evil.

Section 8: **Joseph helps his brothers**

58 And Joseph's brothers came and went in to (see) him, and he knew them, while they did not recognize him. **59**And when he furnished them with their provision, he said: Bring me a brother of yours from your father. Do you not see that I give full measure and that I am the best of hosts? **60**But if you do not bring him to me, you shall have no measure (of corn) from me, nor shall you come near me. **61**They said: We shall try to make his father yield about him, and we are sure to do (it). **62**And he said to his servants: Put their money into their bags that they may recognize it when they go back to their family, so that they may come back.

63 So when they returned to their father, they said: Our father, the measure is withheld from us, so send with us our brother that we may get the measure, and we will surely guard him. **64**He said: Can I trust you with him, except as I trusted you with his brother before? So Allah is the Best Keeper, and He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy.

65 And when they opened their goods, they found their money returned to them. They said: Our father, what (more) can we desire? This is our property returned to us, and we shall bring corn for our family and guard our brother, and have in addition the measure of a camel-load. This is an easy measure. **66**He said: I will by no means send him with you, until you give me a firm promise in Allah's name that you will bring him back to me, unless you are completely surrounded. And when they gave him their promise, he said: Allah is Guardian over what we say. **67**And he said: My sons, do not enter by one gate but enter by different gates.[a] And I cannot avail you against (the decree of) Allah at all. Judgment is only Allah's. On Him I rely, and on Him let the reliant rely.

68 And when they entered as their father had instructed them, it did not avail them against Allah at all, but (it was only) a desire

a **(67)** Jacob, it seems, had come to know by Divine revelation that Joseph was there, and therefore he ordered them to enter by different gates so that Joseph might find his brother. The next verse makes it clear when it says: *And surely he was possessed of knowledge because We had given him knowledge*.

in the soul of Jacob, which he satisfied. And surely he was possessed of knowledge, because We had given him knowledge, but most people do not know.[a]

Section 9: **The youngest brother**

69 And when they came to Joseph, he lodged his brother with himself, saying: I am *y*our brother, so do not grieve at what they do. **70**Then when he furnished them with their provision, (someone) placed the drinking-cup in his brother's bag.[b] Then a crier cried out:[c] O caravan, you are surely thieves! **71**They said, turning towards them: What is it that you miss? **72**They said: We miss the king's drinking-cup, and he who brings it shall have a camel-load, and I am responsible for it. **73**They said: By Allah! You know for certain that we have not come to make mischief in the land, and we are not thieves. **74**They said: But what is the penalty for this, if you are liars? **75**They said: The penalty for this — the person in whose bag it is found, he himself is the penalty for it. Thus do we punish the wrongdoers.

76 So he began with their sacks before the sack of his brother, then he brought it out from his brother's sack. Thus did We plan for the sake of Joseph. He could not take his brother under the king's law, unless Allah pleased.[d] We raise in degree whom We please.

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a **(68)** The Bible narrative represents Jacob as being quite ignorant in the matter.

b **(70-1)** Though the Bible narrative ascribes the placing of the cup to Joseph, the Quran does not say so. It may have been one of Joseph's own brothers who did this act so that Benjamin might also be removed from Jacob, who loved him most after Joseph. There is a clear hint to this possibility in v. 77, where Joseph accuses them of having done some guilty deed: "You are in an evil condition", and a still clearer hint in v. 89, where Joseph says: "Do you know how you treated Joseph and his brother, when you were ignorant?"

c **(70-2)** It is a mistake to suppose that the crier was the very person who had placed the cup there. As v. 72 makes it clear, it was the king's drinking-cup; in other words, it was not Joseph's personal property, but the property of the king, or government property. It is clear that the men who provided corn were different from those who had charge of the king's property.

d **(76)** This makes it clear that this was not Joseph's plan, but a Divine plan. In other words, the circumstances were made to assist Joseph to keep his brother

And above everyone possessed of knowledge is the All-Knowing One. **77**They said: If he steal, a brother of his did indeed steal before.[a] But Joseph kept it secret in his mind, and did not disclose it to them. He said: You are in an evil condition, and Allah knows best what you state. **78**They said: O chief, he has a father, a very old man, so take one of us in his place. Surely we see *y*ou to be one of the doers of good. **79**He said: Allah forbid that we should seize other than him with whom we found our property, for then surely we should be unjust!

Section 10: **Joseph discloses his identity**

80 So when they despaired of (persuading) him, they conferred together privately. The eldest of them said: Do you not know that your father took from you a promise in Allah's name, and how you fell short of your duty about Joseph before? So I shall not leave this land, until my father permits me or Allah decides for me; and He is the Best of the judges. **81**Go back to your father and say: Our father, *y*our son committed theft. And we bear witness only to what we know, and we could not keep watch over the unseen. **82**And ask the town where we were, and the caravan with which we proceeded. And surely we are truthful.

83 (Jacob) said: No, your souls have contrived an affair for you, so patience is best. Maybe Allah will bring them together to me. Surely He is the Knowing, the Wise. **84**And he turned away from them, and said: My sorrow for Joseph! And his eyes were filled [b] (with tears) on account of the grief, then he repressed (grief). **85**They said: By Allah! *Y*ou will not cease remembering Joseph till *y*ou are a prey to disease or *y*ou perish. **86**He said: I complain of my

with him. Joseph's desire, no doubt, was to retain his brother Benjamin while the others returned; but he was unable to do so under the laws of Egypt, as stated here. This shows that one living under an alien government should abide by the laws of that government.

a **(77)** The brothers of Joseph made a false statement against Joseph to cast a veil over their own evil deeds. If Benjamin, they said, was a thief, so was his brother Joseph, as if they meant to say that this evil trait of character was due to the mother, Rachel (probably referring to the incident in Genesis, 31:19).

b **(84)** The word used can carry the meaning of *being filled.* Even if we accept the ordinary significance, *his eyes were whitened,* the meaning is that they were whitened with tears, which naturally came at the mention of Joseph.

grief and sorrow only to Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know.[a] **87**My sons, go and inquire about Joseph and his brother, and do not despair of Allah's mercy.[b] Surely none despairs of Allah's mercy except the disbelieving people.

88 So when they came to him, they said: O chief, distress has afflicted us and our family, and we have brought little money, so give us full measure and be charitable to us. Surely Allah rewards the charitable. **89**He said: Do you know how you treated Joseph and his brother, when you were ignorant? **90**They said: Are *y*ou indeed Joseph? He said: I am Joseph and this is my brother; Allah has indeed been gracious to us. Surely he who keeps his duty and is patient — Allah never wastes the reward of the doers of good. **91**They said: By Allah! Allah has indeed chosen *y*ou over us, and we were certainly sinners. **92**He said: There is no reproach against you this day.[c] Allah may forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy. **93**Take this shirt of mine and cast it before my father's face — he will come to know.[d] And bring to me all your family.

Section 11: **Jacob goes to Egypt**

94 And when the caravan left (Egypt), their father said: Surely I scent (the power of) Joseph, if you do not call me weak of mind.[e]

***a* (86)** This shows clearly that Jacob knew by Divine revelation that Joseph was alive.

***b* (87)** Here the Quran again differs from the Bible and shows that Jacob was so certain of Joseph being alive because of the knowledge he received from God, that he sent his sons a third time to Egypt to ascertain about Joseph. It appears that he had an inkling also that Joseph was in Egypt.

***c* (92)** It is related that the Holy Prophet took hold of the two sides of the gate of the Ka'bah on the day of the conquest of Makkah and said to the Quraish: How do you think I should treat you? They said: We hope for good, a noble brother and the son of a noble brother. Then he said: I say as my brother Joseph said: "There is no reproach against you this day."

***d* (93)** The Quran does not say anywhere that Jacob had become blind. The shirt was sent as being a reminder of the torn shirt of Joseph, which Joseph's brothers had brought to Jacob (v. 18).

***e* (94)** When the caravan in which were Joseph's brothers departed from Egypt, Jacob again received assurance from on High about Joseph, so he said to those around him that he scented the power of Joseph. Jacob knew that Joseph

95They said: By Allah! *Y*ou are surely in *y*our old error.

96 Then when the bearer of good news came, he cast it before his face so he became certain. He said: Did I not say to you that I know from Allah what you do not know? 97They said: Our father, ask forgiveness of our sins for us, surely we are sinners. 98He said: I shall ask forgiveness for you of my Lord. Surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

99 Then when they came to Joseph, he lodged his parents with himself and said: Enter Egypt in safety, if Allah please. 100And he raised his parents on the throne,[a] and they fell prostrate for his sake.[b] And he said: My father, this is the significance of my earlier vision — my Lord has made it true. And He was indeed kind to me, when He brought me forth from the prison, and brought you from the desert after the devil had sown dissensions between me and my brothers. Surely my Lord is Benignant to whom He pleases. Truly He is the Knowing, the Wise. 101My Lord, You have given me kingdom and taught me something of the interpretation of sayings. Originator of the heavens and the earth, You are my Friend in this world and the Hereafter. Make me die in submission and join me with the righteous.

102 This is from the announcements relating to the unseen (which) We reveal to *y*ou, and *y*ou were not with them when they resolved upon their affair, and they were devising plans.[c] 103And most people do not believe, though *y*ou desire it eagerly. 104And *y*ou ask them no reward for it. It is nothing but a Reminder for the nations.

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was alive and of this he informed his sons again and again, but he now told them further that he had received an assurance from God that Joseph occupied a high position.

a **(100-1)** The meaning may be that he placed them in a good position.

b **(100-2)** Seeing the highly dignified position to which Joseph had been raised in Egypt, they all fell prostrate before God as a mark of thanksgiving.

c **(102)** Throughout the Quran the "announcements relating to the unseen", as here, signify not the ancient histories of past prophets, but a repetition of those histories in the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Thus from this verse onwards the subject is changed to the Holy Prophet's opponents. The reference in "when they resolved upon their affair, and they were devising plans" is to the resolution of the Quraish and their plans against the Prophet, for which see 8:30. The Quran does not relate stories for the sake of giving information of the past, but for the lessons which they afford for the future guidance of man.

Section 12: **A lesson for the Prophet's opponents**

105 And how many a sign in the heavens and the earth do they pass by, yet they turn away from it! **106**And most of them do not believe in Allah without setting up partners (with Him). **107**Do they then feel secure from the coming to them of an all-encompassing punishment from Allah or from the coming to them of the hour suddenly, while they do not perceive?

108 Say: This is my way; I call to Allah, with certain knowledge — I and those who follow me. And glory be to Allah! — and I am not of those who set up partners (with Allah). **109**And We did not send before *y*ou any but men, from the people of the towns, to whom We sent revelation. Have they not then travelled in the land and seen what was the end of those before them? And certainly the abode of the Hereafter is best for those who keep their duty. Do you not then understand? **110**Until, when the messengers despaired and (the people) thought that they were told a lie,[a] Our help came to them, and whom We pleased was delivered. And Our punishment is not averted from the guilty people. **111**In their histories there is certainly a lesson for those who have understanding. It is not a narrative which could be forged, but a verification of what is before it, and a distinct explanation of all things, and a guide and a mercy to a people who believe.

***a* (110)** "They" refers to the people, not messengers. The messengers warn their people, but the latter are so stubborn that the messengers at length despair of their people. The people, on the other hand, think that what the prophets had told them about the coming of the punishment was a lie. Then it is that the promised help for the prophets comes and the punishment with which the evildoers are threatened overtakes them. That the prophets never despair of Divine assistance coming to them, in accordance with Divine promise, is clear from what has already been said in v. 87 (see also 15:56 and 29:23).

Chapter 13

Al-Ra'd Thunder

This chapter is named *Thunder* from the analogy of rain which is often likened to revelation in the Quran. As rain is accompanied by thunder and lightening, so is revelation accompanied by warning of punishment, although its real purpose is mercy. The chapter points to signs in physical nature to the truth of revelation and deals with the demand from the disbelievers to see the sign of punishment befalling them. It then tells them about the Divine laws which govern reward and punishment, and explains that the real miracles were the spiritual life that the Quran awakened in people and the transformation it would bring in the world despite facing great mountains of obstacles. This chapter was revealed during the last four years of the period of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah.

Section 1: **Truth of revelation**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Best Knower, the Seer.[a] These are verses of the Book. And what is revealed to *y*ou from *y*our Lord is the Truth, but most people do not believe. **2**Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see, and He is established on the Throne of Power, and He made the sun and the moon subservient (to you). Each one runs to an appointed term.[b] He regulates the affair, making clear the messages that you may be certain of the meeting with your Lord.

3 And He it is Who spread the earth, and made in it firm mountains and rivers. And of all fruits He has made in it pairs, two (of every kind). He makes the night cover the day. Surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect. **4**And in the earth are tracts side by side, and gardens of vines, and corn, and palm-trees growing from one root and distinct roots — they are watered with

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a **(1)** The original Arabic consists of the letters *alif, lām, mīm* and *rā.* These stand for *ana* (I), *Allāh, A'lam* (Best Knower), and *Rā'ī,* (Seer) respectively.

b **(2)** All heavenly bodies are raised high without any pillars that man can see. Those pillars are the laws of gravitation. All heavenly bodies, we are further told, run their course to an appointed term; they have a beginning and an end, as all things on earth have a beginning and an end.

one water; and We make some of them to excel others in fruit. Surely there are signs in this for a people who understand.[a]

5 And if *y*ou wonder, then wondrous is their saying: When we are dust, shall we then be raised in a new creation? These are they who disbelieve in their Lord, and these have chains on their necks,[b] and they are the companions of the Fire; in it they will abide. **6**And they ask *y*ou to hasten on the evil before the good, and indeed there have been exemplary punishments before them. And surely *y*our Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind despite their wrongdoing. And surely *y*our Lord is Severe in retribution.[c] **7**And those who disbelieve say: Why has not a sign been sent down to him from his Lord? *Y*ou are only a warner and for every people a guide.[d]

Section 2: **Fall and rise of nations**

8 Allah knows what every female bears, and what the wombs fall short of completing and what they grow.[e] And everything with Him has a measure. **9**The Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Great, the Most High. **10**Alike (to Him) among you is he who conceals the word and he who speaks openly, and he who hides himself by night and (who) goes forth by day.[f] **11**For him are

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a **(4)** Unity in diversity is observable in the whole of nature, which is a sure sign of the Unity of the great Author of all existence. Besides this, as there is a difference in the produce of different tracts, though they are subject to the same laws of nature, even so are the hearts of people in relation to the growth of the seed of virtue, which is sown by revelation.

b **(5)** The chains spoken of here are the chains which keep them constrained to evil usages and corrupt practices.

c **(6)** The opponents of the Holy Prophet are told that the Merciful God would deal with them not according to their wrongdoings, but according to His vast and comprehensive forgiveness. But when evil outsteps all bounds, His very mercy, which must be exercised towards His righteous servants, requires that the wrongdoers should not be left without punishment.

d **(7)** The words *for every people a guide* refer to the Holy Prophet. He was a warner indeed; he warned the evildoers of the evil consequences of their evil deeds, but he was ultimately to be a guide for every people, to lead them out of their evil ways and to set them on the right path.

e **(8)** The physical law of nature is spoken of here with a deeper reference to the spiritual law, according to which some receive a new birth through the Prophet and others do not. The subject is made clearer in the verses that follow.

f **(10)** A general law is given expression to here, with a deeper reference to

(angels) guarding the consequences (of his deeds), before him and behind him, who guard him by Allah's command.[a] Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people, until they change their own condition. And when Allah intends harm to a people, there is no averting it, and besides Him they have no protector.

12 He it is Who shows you lightning causing fear and hope and (Who) brings up the heavy cloud. **13**And thunder celebrates His praise, and the angels too for awe of Him. And He sends thunderbolts and strikes with them whom He pleases, yet they dispute concerning Allah, and He is Mighty in prowess.

14 To Him is due the true prayer. And those to whom they pray besides Him give them no answer, but (they are) like one who stretches forth his two hands towards water that it may reach his mouth, but it will not reach it. And the prayer of the disbelievers is only wasted. **15**And whoever is in the heavens and the earth makes submission to Allah only, willingly and unwillingly, and their shadows, too, morning and evening.

16 Say: Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth? Say: Allah. Say: Do you then take besides Him, guardians who control no benefit or harm even for themselves? Say: Are the blind and the seeing alike? Or, are darkness and light equal? Or, have they set up with Allah partners who have created creation like His, so that what is created became confused to them? Say: Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Supreme.

17 He sends down water from the clouds, then watercourses flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam. And a scum like it arises from what they melt in the fire for the sake of making ornaments or tools.[b] Thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood. Then as for the scum, it passes away

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the secret and open counsels against the Holy Prophet and to enemies seeking his life by day and by night.

***a* (11)** While the statement is no doubt general and refers to the guardian angels referred to in 6:61, there is a deeper allusion to the Divine protection specially granted to the Holy Prophet against the numerous enemies among whom he lived day and night. The angels guard the consequences of the deeds of man, and are therefore spoken of here as *guarding him,* i.e., *guarding whatever he does,* by Allah's command.

***b* (17-1)** The word used includes here all kinds of things necessary for the life of man, such as utensils, tools, implements, and instruments of war.

as a worthless thing; and as for that which benefits people, it remains behind in the earth. Thus does Allah set forth parables.[a] **18**For those who respond to their Lord is good. And as for those who do not respond to Him, even if they had all that is in the earth and as much again, they would certainly offer it for a ransom. As for those, theirs is an evil reckoning and their abode is hell; and evil is the resting-place.

Section 3: **Good and evil bring their own reward**

19 Is he who knows that what is revealed to *y*ou from *y*our Lord is the truth, like him who is blind? Only those who have understanding are mindful — **20**those who fulfil the pact of Allah, and do not break the covenant, **21**and those who join what Allah has ordered to be joined [b] and have awe of their Lord, and fear the evil reckoning. **22**And those who are steadfast seeking the pleasure of their Lord, and keep up prayer and spend (on good works) out of what We have given them, secretly and openly, and repel evil with good;[c] theirs is the (happy) issue of the abode — **23**Gardens of perpetuity, which they will enter along with those who do good from among their fathers and their spouses[d] and their offspring; and the angels will enter in upon them from every gate. **24**Peace be on you, because you were constant — how excellent is then the final abode!

25 And those who break the covenant of Allah after its

***a* (17-2)** The parable set forth here signifies that the Holy Prophet and his followers will live and prosper, as they work for the good of mankind. On the other hand, evil practices and worthless usages and customs, as well as those who uphold them, will be swept away before the mighty current of Truth, as rubbish is borne away by a torrent.

***b* (21)** While the previous verse deals with people's duty to their Maker, this refers to relations with His creatures. "What Allah has ordered to be joined" includes all those ties of love and relationship which Allah has taught human beings to observe and keep inviolate.

***c* (22)** *Evil* is a thing which is by all means to be repelled, and hence *good for evil* is recommended only in cases when *evil* would be *repelled* by that good. Unconditionally requiting evil with good would abolish all safeguards; evildoers who received nothing but good for every evil they committed would most assuredly establish a condition of anarchy by their evil deeds. Elsewhere it is said: *whoever forgives and brings about reform* (42:40).

***d* (23)** The Quran is full of clear statements that women shall enjoy the bliss of paradise. *Azwāj* is the plural of *zauj,* which means either husband or wife, and hence I have rendered it as spouses.

confirmation, and cut apart what Allah has ordered to be joined, and make mischief in the land, for them is the curse, and theirs is the evil end of the abode. **26**Allah amplifies provision for whom He pleases, and restricts (it also). And they rejoice in this world's life. And this world's life, compared with the Hereafter, is only a temporary enjoyment.

Section 4: **Revolution to be brought about by the Quran**

27 And those who disbelieve say: Why is not a sign sent down to him by his Lord?[a] Say: Allah leaves in error whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him)[b] — **28**those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah. Now surely in Allah's remembrance do hearts find rest. **29**Those who believe and do good, a good final state is theirs and a goodly return. **30**Thus We have sent *y*ou among a nation before which other nations have passed away, that *y*ou might recite to them what We have revealed to *y*ou, and (still) they deny the Beneficent. Say: He is my Lord, there is no god but He; in Him do I trust and to Him is my return.

31 And if there could be a Quran with which the mountains were made to pass away, or the earth were split apart, or the dead were made to speak — indeed, the commandment is wholly Allah's.[c] Do not those who believe know that, if Allah please,

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***a* (27-1)** The answer to this question is given at the end of this section: "disaster will not cease to afflict them because of what they do, or it will reach close to their homes, until the promise of Allah come to pass" (v. 31). This promise related to the utter annihilation of the power of the disbelievers. The question, *why is not a sign sent down to him,* here as elsewhere in the Quran, is a demand for the promised annihilation of their power and their defeat, and the answer is always conveyed in somewhat similar terms, stating first that they should ask for mercy; that the Quran has healing power, the condition of the faithful being a witness to it; that the fate of the former generations affords a lesson; that smaller calamities continue to afflict them, and in these they can see the signs of their ultimate vanquishment; and that finally, if all those tokens are rejected, the great calamity will not fail to overtake them.

***b* (27-2)** The contrast with *those who turn to God* makes it clear that Allah's pleasure to leave some in error is exercised only in the case of those who, though invited to God, do not turn to Him but choose to remain in error. The first part may also be translated thus: *Allah leaves in error who will (remain in error).*

***c* (31)** That the Quran should work such great wonders is not an impossibility but a fact, for we are immediately told that it will be brought about soon by

He would certainly guide all the people? And as for those who disbelieve, disaster will not cease to afflict them because of what they do, or it will reach close to their homes, until the promise of Allah come to pass. Surely Allah will not fail in (His) promise.

Section 5: **Opposition will fail**

32 And messengers before *y*ou were certainly mocked, but I gave respite to those who disbelieved, then I seized them. How (terrible) was then My retribution! **33**Is, then, He Who watches every soul as to what it earns (like their associate gods)? And yet they ascribe partners to Allah! Say: Name them.[a] Would you inform Him of what He does not know in the earth, or of an outward saying?[b] Rather, their plan is made to seem good to those who disbelieve, and they are kept back from the path.[c] And whom Allah leaves in error, he has no guide. **34**For them is punishment in this world's life, and the punishment of the Hereafter is certainly more grievous. And they have no protector against Allah.

35 A parable of the Garden which is promised to those who keep their duty: [d] In it flow rivers. Its fruits are perpetual and (so is)

Allah's commandment. At the time when these verses were revealed, difficulties in the spread of Islam appeared like mountains. It is a matter of history that they were made to pass away. The earth splitting apart means that the Quran would go deep down into the hearts of people, which are compared here to the earth. These words may also mean that the earth will be *travelled over*. There were no facilities at that time for going to distant corners of Arabia, to say nothing of the whole world. Yet not only was the whole of Arabia travelled over by the message-bearers of Islam within ten years after this, but within a hundred years of the Prophet's death Islam had traversed the whole of the known world, from the farthest East in China to the farthest West in Spain. It is again a matter of history that *the dead were made to speak*. People who were dead spiritually now spoke with such power that the whole earth from end to end responded to their call.

a **(33-1)** It is to show the utmost contempt for the alleged partners of the Divine Being that their worshippers are called upon to give them a name, as if it were said that they are not worthy of a name. Or the meaning may be, give them a name expressing any qualification of godhead, such as a sustainer, creator, etc.

b **(33-2)** He knows both the inner feelings of man and his outward sayings, and He does not stand in need of a mediator.

c **(33-3)** As stated in 29:38, it is the devil who makes their evil deeds seem good to people and keeps them back from the right path.

d **(35)** The paradise mentioned here is called a *parable,* as also in 47:15. A saying of the Holy Prophet makes it clear that the blessings of paradise are such

its plenty. Such is the end for those who keep their duty; and the end for the disbelievers is the Fire. [36]And those to whom We have given the Book rejoice in what has been revealed to *y*ou,[a] and some sects deny a part of it. Say: I am commanded only to serve Allah and not set up partners with Him. To Him do I invite (you), and to Him is my return. [37]And thus have We revealed it, a true judgment, in Arabic. And if *y*ou follow their low desires after the knowledge that has come to *y*ou, *y*ou would have against Allah no guardian nor protector.

Section 6: **Steady progress of Truth**

38 And certainly We sent messengers before *y*ou and appointed for them wives and children. And it is not in the power of a messenger to bring a sign except by Allah's permission. For every term there is an appointment. [39]Allah effaces what He pleases and establishes (what He pleases), and with Him is the basis of the Book.[b]

40 Whether We show *y*ou part of what We promise them, or cause *y*ou to die (before it comes about), *y*our duty is only to deliver the message, and Ours to call (them) to account. [41]Do they not see that We are visiting the land, curtailing it of its sides?[c] And Allah pronounces a doom — there is no repeller of His decree. And He is Swift in calling to account. [42]And those before them planned

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as no eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of them (Bukhari, 59:8, hadith 3244). The description given in the Quran is only a likeness of what it actually is, as it is of a nature entirely different from the things of this world.

a **(36)** The *Book* may signify the Quran; or it may refer to the previous revelation, in which case the Jewish and Christian converts to Islam are meant here.

b **(39)** The Divine ordinance to annihilate the power of the opponents of the Holy Prophet and to bring about the establishment of the Truth is called the "basis of the Book" (*Umm al-Kitāb*), because the final defeat of the powers of evil, which was previously foretold, would be such a clear sign that it would dispel all doubts.

c **(41)** The reference in curtailing the sides may be either to some of the exalted men having come over to Islam and the opposition being thus weakened, or to the diminution of the number of disbelievers, both high and low, by people daily leaving their ranks and joining the ranks of Islam.

indeed, but all planning is Allah's.[a] He knows what every soul earns. And the disbelievers will come to know for whom is the (good) end of the abode. **43**And those who disbelieve say: *Y*ou are not a messenger. Say: Allah is sufficient for a witness between me and you and whoever has knowledge of the Book.[b]

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a **(42)** The meaning is that the plans of the enemy need not be feared, for all their planning is controlled by Allah, or that the requital of their plans is in the hands of Allah.

b **(43)** Those who have any knowledge of previous revelation will testify to the truth of the revelation of the Quran, because it fulfils all previous prophecies and satisfies the criteria of a true revelation.

Chapter 14

Ibrāhīm Abraham

This chapter is named after Abraham, whose prayer is mentioned in verses 35–41. It explains that the work of the Quran is to lead people out of darkness into light, but that previous prophets too, such as Moses, had their message rejected at first. However, in all cases the opposition failed and God's promise to help the prophet was fulfilled. Truth is confirmed and man brings about his own ruin by rejecting it. Then Abraham's prayer for the right guidance of his descendants is mentioned and we are told that opposition to the truth will always end in failure. This chapter was revealed during the last four years of the period of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah.

Section 1: **Revelation dispels darkness**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Seer. A Book which We have revealed to *y*ou that *y*ou may bring forth people, by their Lord's permission, from darkness into light, to the way of the Mighty, the Praised One, **2**of Allah, Whose is whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And woe to the disbelievers for the severe punishment! **3**Those who love this world's life more than the Hereafter, and turn away from Allah's path, and would have it crooked. Those are far astray.

4 And We sent no messenger but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly.[a] Then Allah leaves in error whom He pleases and He guides whom He pleases. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.

5 And certainly We sent Moses with Our messages, saying: Bring forth *y*our people from darkness into light and remind them of the days of Allah.[b] In this are surely signs for every steadfast,

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***a* (4)** Nothing is said here about the extent of the mission of the Holy Prophet, which was for all mankind; see 7:158. All that is said here is that every prophet is sent with the language of his people so that he may explain to his people, because it is his people who are the first recipients of his message.

***b* (5)** "The days of Allah" signify His merciful dealings with the righteous and His punishment of the wicked.

grateful one. **6**And when Moses said to his people: Call to mind Allah's favour to you, when He delivered you from Pharaoh's people, who subjected you to severe torment, and slaughtered your sons and spared your women. And there was a great trial in it from your Lord.

Section 2: **Truth is rejected first**

7 And when your Lord made it known: If you are grateful, I will give you more, and if you are ungrateful, My punishment is truly severe. **8**And Moses said: If you are ungrateful, you and all those on earth, then Allah is surely Self-sufficient, Praised.

9 Has not the account reached you of those before you, of the people of Noah and Ād and Thamūd — and those after them? None knows them but Allah.[a] Their messengers came to them with clear arguments, but they thrust their hands into their mouths [b] and said: We deny what you are sent with, and surely we are in serious doubt about that to which you invite us.[c] **10**Their messengers said: Is there doubt about Allah, the Maker of the heavens and the earth? He invites you to forgive you your faults and to give you respite till an appointed term. They said: You are nothing but mortals like us; you wish to turn us away from what our fathers used to worship, so bring us clear authority.

11 Their messengers said to them: We are nothing but mortals like yourselves, but Allah bestows (His) favours on whom He pleases of His servants. And it is not for us to bring you an authority, except by Allah's permission. And on Allah let the believers rely. **12**And why should we not rely on Allah and He has indeed guided us in our ways? And we would certainly bear with patience your persecution of us. And on Allah should the reliant rely.

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a **(9-1)** The Quran does not claim to give a history of all the prophets; see 4:164 and 40:78. The statement made here is much wider. It is claimed that no other book mentions them all; they are known only to Allah.

b **(9-2)** This expression may mean their inability to give an answer, or that they bit their hands by reason of rage, or that they put their hands into the mouths of the messengers to silence them.

c **(9-3)** The general statements made with regard to the messengers and the treatment of their people, in this and the following section, are particularly made in reference to the mission of the Prophet Muhammad, the opposition and enmity of his people, their turning him out of the city, and their final discomfiture.

Section 3: **Opposition is at last destroyed**

13 And those who disbelieved said to their messengers: We will certainly drive you out of our land, unless you come back into our religion.[a] So their Lord revealed to them: We shall certainly destroy the wrongdoers, **14**and We shall certainly settle you in the land after them. This is for him who fears standing in My presence and fears My threat.[b] **15**And they sought judgment, and every insolent opposer was disappointed: **16**Hell is before him and he is given to drink boiling water; **17**he drinks it little by little and is not able to swallow it; and death comes to him from every quarter, yet he does not die.[c] And before him is vehement punishment.

18 The parable of those who disbelieve in their Lord: Their works are as ashes on which the wind blows hard on a stormy day. They have no power over anything they have earned. That is straying far away. **19**Do *y*ou not see that Allah created the heavens and the earth with truth? If He please, He will take you away and bring a new creation, **20**and that is not difficult for Allah.[d] **21**And they will all come forth to Allah, then the weak will say to those who were proud: We were your followers, can you then avert from us any of the punishment of Allah? They will say: If Allah had guided us, we would have guided you. It is the same to us whether we cry or bear patiently; there is no escape for us.

Section 4: **Truth is confirmed**

22 And the devil will say,[e] when the matter is decided: Surely Allah promised you a promise of truth, and I promised you, then

***a* (13)** This is no doubt equally a description of what the Holy Prophet was suffering at the hands of his enemies.

***b* (14)** This verse contains a very clear prophecy of the flight of the Holy Prophet from Makkah and of his re-entry into that city as a conqueror and ruler.

***c* (17)** He experiences, as it were, the pangs of death, but death, which would end all distress, does not come to him.

***d* (20)** V. 18 states that all the exertions of the opponents against the Prophet will be useless, while verses 19 and 20 warn the disbelievers that their power will come to an end and another people will take their place.

***e* (22-1)** The devil mentioned in this verse is none other than the proud misleader of the preceding one. Compare also 37:30, where the very words *we had no authority over you* are put into the mouth of the leaders of evil from among mankind.

failed you.[a] And I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you obeyed me; so do not blame me but blame yourselves. I cannot come to your help, nor can you come to my help. I deny your taking me as partner with Allah before.[b] Surely for the unjust is a painful punishment.

23 And those who believe and do good are made to enter Gardens, in which rivers flow, abiding in them by their Lord's permission. Their greeting therein is, Peace! **24**Do *y*ou not see how Allah sets forth a parable of a good word as a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are high,[c] **25**yielding its fruit in every season by the permission of its Lord? And Allah sets forth parables for people that they may be mindful. **26**And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface; it has no stability.[d] **27**Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the Hereafter; and Allah leaves the wrongdoers in error; and Allah does what He pleases.[e]

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a **(22-2)** Whenever a person is misled into an evil deed, he finds in the end that the promise of a good consequence for an evil deed was only a deception. Compare 4:120 and 17:64.

b **(22-3)** An alternative meaning is: *I disbelieved because you took me as partner with Allah.* In other words, the leaders disbelieve because their followers make them think by their flattery that they are worthy of being obeyed and followed.

c **(24)** The parable likening a good word to a good tree follows immediately a description of the final abode of those who do good — Gardens in which rivers flow. A good word is like a good tree which gives its fruit in every season, and therefore the fruits which a man will find in paradise are only the fruits of his own good deeds. The trees of paradise are in fact man's own good deeds, which have grown into trees, bearing a fruit which is an embodiment of the spiritual fruits of the good deeds of this life. As good deeds are likened to fruit-bearing trees, faith is likened to water repeatedly in the Quran, being the source of physical life. It is for this reason that, just as the righteous are always spoken of as being those who *believe* and *do good,* paradise is always described as being a *Garden* in which *rivers* flow, the *rivers* corresponding to *faith* and the *trees* of the Garden corresponding to the *good* which a person does.

d **(26)** The evil deed is likened to a tree whose roots do not go down into the earth, and in whose case, therefore, the process of nutrition must stop. Therefore an evil deed does not prosper and cannot bear any fruit.

e **(27)** *Allah does what He pleases,* but it is the *wrongdoers* only, whom He leaves in error. The immediate cause of their going astray is their own iniquity.

Section 5: **Man's injustice in rejecting Truth**

28 Do *y*ou not see those who change Allah's favour for disbelief [a] and make their people reach the abode of destruction? — **29**(It is) hell. They will burn in it. And an evil place it is to settle in! **30**And they set up equals with Allah to lead astray from His path. Say: Enjoy yourselves, for surely your return is to the Fire.

31 Tell My servants who believe to keep up prayer and spend (on good works) out of what We have given them, secretly and openly, before the coming of the day in which there is no bartering, nor befriending. **32**Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down water from the clouds, then brought forth with it fruits as a sustenance for you, and He has made the ships subservient to you to run their course in the sea by His command, and He has made the rivers subservient to you.[b] **33**And He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon, pursuing their courses; and He has made subservient to you the night and the day. **34**And He gives you of all that you ask of Him. And if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to number them. Surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful.

Section 6: **Abraham's prayer**

35 And when Abraham said: My Lord, make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols.[c] **36**My Lord, surely they have led many people astray.[d] So whoever follows me, he is surely of me; and whoever disobeys me, You surely are Forgiving, Merciful.[e] **37**Our Lord, I have settled a part of my offspring

***a* (28)** They reject Allah's favour, the Revelation, which aims at making them a great and exalted people, and adopt disbelief in its place.

***b* (32)** The whole of creation is here, and in the next verse, declared to be made subservient to man, to show his high place in creation. How much then does man degrade himself by worshipping things which were made to serve him!

***c* (35)** That idolatry received a deathblow from the hands of one of Abraham's descendants shows that Abraham's prayer was not in vain.

***d* (36-1)** Idols do not actually lead people astray; the meaning is that it is on account of them that people go astray.

***e* (36-2)** The prayer of Abraham is in fact the prayer of the Holy Prophet and illustrates the breadth of his view. Those who follow him are, of course, his own, but he does not reject even those who disobey him, for he prays for Allah's mercy and protection even for them.

in a valley unproductive of fruit near Your Sacred House,[a] our Lord, that they may keep up prayer; so make the hearts of some people yearn towards them, and provide them with fruits; perhaps they may be grateful. **38**Our Lord, surely You know what we hide and what we proclaim. And nothing is hidden from Allah, either in the earth or in the heaven.

39 Praise be to Allah, Who has given me, in old age, Ishmael and Isaac! Surely my Lord is the Hearer of prayer. **40**My Lord, make me keep up prayer and (those) from my offspring (too), our Lord, and accept my prayer. **41**Our Lord, grant me protection and my parents and the believers on the day when the reckoning comes to pass.

Section 7: **The end of opposition**

42 And do not think Allah to be heedless of what the unjust do. He only gives them respite to a day when the eyes will stare (in terror), **43**hastening forward, their heads upraised, their gaze not returning to them, and their hearts vacant.[b] **44**And warn people of a day when the punishment will come to them, then the wrongdoers will say: Our Lord, grant us respite for a short while, we will respond to Your call and follow the messengers. Did you not swear before, that there will be no passing away for you? **45**And you dwell in the abodes of those who wronged themselves, and it is clear to you how We dealt with them and We made (them) examples for you. **46**And they have indeed planned their plan, and their plan is

***a* (37)** According to a Hadith report (Bukhari, 60:9, hadith 3664), Abraham brought Hagar and Ishmael, and settled them near the ruins of the Sacred House, the Ka'bah. This, as the hadith states, was done under a Divine commandment. For when Abraham was going back, on leaving them both in this wilderness, where there was no town at this time, Hagar asked him, Is it by Allah's commandment that you are doing this? Abraham's reply was, Yes. Then said Hagar: "Allah will not leave us to perish." It is further stated that, when no water was left with her, Hagar ran to and fro, between the Safa and the Marwah, to find out if there was any caravan going that way. It was on this occasion that she saw an angel, who pointed to her a place where she could find water. This was the place known now as Zamzam. It was due to this water that some people settled there. Even the Bible accepts that Ishmael's descendants settled in Arabia.

***b* (43)** The striking of terror into the hearts of those who opposed the Prophet was witnessed in this very life, when the Prophet advanced on Makkah. The vacancy or blankness of the heart indicates a state of great terror.

with Allah, though their plan is such that the mountains should be moved by it.[a]

47 So do not think that Allah will fail in His promise to His messengers. Surely Allah is Mighty, the Lord of retribution. **48**On the day when the earth will be changed into a different earth, and the heavens (as well),[b] and they will come forth to Allah, the One, the Supreme. **49**And *y*ou will see the guilty on that day linked together in chains[c] — **50**their shirts made of pitch, and fire covering their faces, **51**that Allah may repay each soul what it has earned. Surely Allah is Swift in reckoning. **52**This is a message for the people and that they may be warned by it, and that they may know that He is One God, and that those who have understanding may be mindful.

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a **(46)** The reference is to the plan of the Quraish to put an end to the Prophet's life, when he was left almost alone in Makkah. The words *their plan is with Allah* signify that their plan is controlled by Allah, Who will make it ineffective. A wonderful prophecy indeed in the mouth of a man whose only chance of saving himself now lay in escaping from his enemies, while they were taking every precaution not to allow him to escape, having decided to put him to death!

b **(48)** The transformation wrought by the Holy Prophet no doubt changed the earth into a different earth and the heaven into a new heaven. The Arabia at the birth of the Prophet was not the Arabia at his death. Beliefs, usages, and practices, which had baffled all attempts at reformation for centuries, were swept away, and the ignorant, superstitious, and warring tribes had become a single nation, holding aloft the torch of knowledge and civilization to the whole world. Idolatry was blotted out of existence so completely that no vestige of it could be found among a people who had remained addicted to it for centuries. And that great change must now come over the whole world. But the spiritual resurrection is only an indication of the great day of Resurrection.

c **(49)** The powerful opponents of the Prophet were brought before him linked together in chains in this very life, at the Battle of Badr. These promises were fulfilled in this life to show that they were equally true as regards the next.

Chapter 15

Al-Ḥijr The Rock

This chapter is named *The Rock* after the dwellers of the Rock mentioned in v. 80, whose fate is a warning to those who sought to kill the Holy Prophet. The chapter begins with the grand promise that the Quran shall forever be guarded against all corruption and all attempts to annihilate it (v. 9). It goes on to declare that evil-doers cannot inflict any injury on the chosen ones of God and that the devil's opposition has always failed. Then it gives examples of how opponents of previous prophets were destroyed. This chapter was revealed at Makkah.

Section 1: **The Quran is guarded**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Seer. These are the verses of the Book and (of) a Quran that makes clear.

2 Often will those who disbelieve wish that they were Muslims.[a] **3**Leave them to eat and enjoy themselves, and let (false) hope beguile them, for they will soon know. **4**And never did We destroy a town but it had a decree made known. **5**No people can hasten on their doom, nor postpone it.

6 And they say: *Y*ou, to whom the Reminder is revealed, *y*ou are indeed mad. **7**Why do *y*ou not bring the angels to us, if *y*ou are truthful? [b] **8**We do not send angels but with truth, and then they would not be given respite. **9**Surely We have revealed the Reminder, and surely We are its Guardian.[c]

Part 14

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a **(2)** The passage does not refer only to life after death. The opponents, who thought Islam would soon be annihilated, must no doubt have felt after in life, when the truth of Islam became manifest, that it would have been much better for them if they had accepted Islam at the first call of the Prophet.

b **(7)** The words *if you are truthful* clearly show that the coming of angels is demanded in relation to the fulfilment of prophecies. In the next verse they are told that the angels will be sent, in accordance with the requirements of truth and justice, when they are required to execute the judgment of the doom of the opponents.

c **(9)** This is one of the most wonderful prophecies, whose fulfilment is, and

10 And certainly We sent (messengers) before *y*ou among the sects of old. **11**And never did a messenger come to them but they mocked him. **12**Thus do We make it enter the hearts of the guilty [a] — **13**they do not believe in it; and the example of the ancients has gone before. **14**And even if We open to them a gate of heaven, and they keep on ascending into it, **15**they would say: Only our eyes have been covered over, rather we are a people under enchantment.[b]

Section 2: **Forces of evil will be destroyed**

16 And certainly We have made strongholds in the heaven, and We have made it attractive for the onlookers, **17**and We guard it against every accursed devil, **18**but he who steals a hearing; so there follows him a visible flame.[c]

19 And the earth — We have spread it out and made in it firm mountains and caused to grow in it of every suitable thing. **20**And We have made in it means of subsistence for you and for those (creatures) for whom you do not provide. **21**And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure. **22**And We send the winds fertilizing, then

will ever remain, a standing testimony to the truth of the Holy Quran, that the Quran will for all time be preserved safe against all attempts to destroy it and from every kind of corruption. The fulfilment of this prophecy is so evident a fact that a hostile writer like Sir William Muir admitted that "there is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text" (*The Life of Mahomet,* 1861, ch. 1). In the whole length and breadth of the Islamic world there does not exist a single copy with any variation from the recognized text, and thus not only was the Quran preserved from destruction against a powerful enemy, but it has also been preserved from corruption.

a **(12)** *Thus* refers to the mockery mentioned in the previous verse. Due to their mockery, it enters their hearts not to believe in the Divine message.

b **(15)** Verses 14–15 speak of the hardness of their hearts. They were determined to reject the truth and did not pay any attention to the clearest evidence.

c **(18)** The three verses 16–18 speak of the soothsayers and the diviners, who were among the opponents of the Holy Prophet; they pretended to receive communications from on High. We are here told that they were really driven from the Divine presence, and therefore could not have any access to that source of purity. In speaking of the divinations as being followed by a visible flame, it is indicated that they meet with failure and disappointment. The description of spiritual truths in words relating to physical laws prevailing in the world is of common occurrence in the Quran.

send down water from the clouds,[a] so We give it to you to drink; nor is it you who store it up. **23**And surely it is We, Who give life and cause death, and We are the Inheritors.[b]

24 And certainly We know those among you who go forward and We certainly know those who lag behind. **25**And surely *y*our Lord will gather them together. He indeed is Wise, Knowing.[c]

Section 3: **The devil's opposition to the righteous**

26 And surely We created man of sounding clay, of black mud fashioned into shape. **27**And the jinn, We created before of intensely hot fire.[d] **28**And when *y*our Lord said to the angels: I am going to create a mortal of sounding clay, of black mud fashioned into shape. **29**So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit,[e] fall down making submission to him. **30**So the angels submitted, all of them together — **31**but not Iblīs. He refused to be with those who submitted.

32 He said: O Iblīs, what is the reason that *y*ou are not with those who submit? **33**He said: I am not going to submit to a mortal,

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a **(22)** The fertilizing winds represent the signs of the progress of Islam before its final triumph, which is indicated by the rain from the clouds.

b **(23)** One who inherits is the one who remains after another has perished. The announcement made here is a prophecy that the true worshippers of Allah will be heirs in the land while the others will perish.

c **(25)** One meaning is that *those who are foremost in accepting truth* and *those who lag behind in accepting it* will all be gathered together, i.e., ultimately those who now lag behind will be brought over to the right course.

d **(27)** See also 7:12 footnote. Man's creation from dust also refers to his low and humble origin and his temperate nature, as opposed to another kind of creation of a fiery nature, which is called the *jinn* or the *devil*. The two words, *jinn* and *devil*, are frequently applied to men of a fiery temperament or rebellious nature who lead others to evil. These descriptions of the creation of *men* and *jinn* are allegorical, referring respectively to the nature of those who are submissive to Divine laws and those who rebel against them, and the allegory is carried on further in what is stated of the rebellion of the devil against Adam. The two descriptions of the origin of man, his being made from clay that gives sound and of mud that is fashioned into shape, refer to the two great characteristics which give man a superiority over other animals, namely, his use of language and the perfection of his make.

e **(29)** This shows that man is made complete when the Divine spirit is breathed into him. The *Divine spirit* (Arabic: *rūḥ*) does not mean here the *animal soul* in man, but the *spirit of Allah* that gives him perfection.

whom You have created of sounding clay, of black mud fashioned into shape. [34]He said: Then go forth, for surely *y*ou are driven away, [35]and surely on *y*ou is a curse till the day of Judgment. [36]He said: My Lord, grant me respite till the day when they are raised.[a] [37]He said: Surely *y*ou are granted respite, [38] till the day of the time made known.

39 He said: My Lord, as You have judged me to be in error,[b] I shall certainly make (evil) seem good to them on earth, and I shall cause them all to deviate, [40]except Your servants from among them, the purified ones. [41]He said: This is a right way with Me. [42]As regards My servants, *y*ou have no authority over them except such of the deviators as follow *y*ou.[c] [43]And surely hell is the promised place for them all — [44]it has seven gates. For each gate is an appointed portion of them.[d]

Section 4: **Mercy for the righteous — Abraham**

45 Surely those who keep their duty are in Gardens and fountains. [46] Enter them in peace, secure. [47]And We shall remove whatever of bitterness is in their hearts — as brothers, on thrones, facing each other. [48] Toil does not afflict them therein, nor will they be ejected from there.[e] [49] Inform My servants that I am the Forgiving,

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a **(36)** When a man is raised to life spiritually, the suggestions and the promptings of the devil cease to affect him. But until he finds spiritual life, evil suggestions mislead him now and then. This is the "time made known" in v. 38.

b **(39)** The meaning is clearly "as You have *judged me* to be in error" and not *caused me to be in error*.

c **(42)** In a broad sense all people are servants of Allah. That the devil has no authority over them is clear from 14:22, where the devil says to his followers: "I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you obeyed me."

d **(44)** The seven gates mean the seven ways which lead into it, according to which there are seven different names of hell in the Quran. However, the numeral *seven* in Arabic often stands for a large number, so that the meaning may be that there are many gates or many ways leading to it.

e **(48)** Such is the Muslim paradise. There is absolute peace of mind, perfect security from any inclination to evil or any other danger (v. 46); there is a brotherhood in which no one conceals any rancour in his heart for his brother, nor has anyone a complaint against another (v. 47); and lastly, there is neither toil nor fatigue, nor is one to be ever deprived of that state of perfect bliss (v. 48). This verse further establishes that those who are once made to enter paradise are not

the Merciful, [50]and that My punishment — that is the painful punishment.

51 And inform them of the guests of Abraham. [52]When they came to him, they said, Peace! He said: We are afraid of you. [53]They said: Do not be afraid, we give *y*ou good news of a boy, possessing knowledge. [54]He said: Do you give me good news when old age has come upon me? Of what then do you give me good news? [55]They said: We give *y*ou good news with truth, so do not be from among the despairing ones. [56]He said: And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord except those in error?

57 He said: What is your business, then, messengers? [58]They said: We have been sent to a guilty people, [59]except Lot's followers. We shall deliver them all, [60]except his wife: We ordained that she shall surely be among those who remain behind.

Section 5: **Lot and Shuaib**

61 So when the messengers came to Lot's followers, [62]he said: Surely you are an unknown people. [63]They said: Indeed, we have come to *y*ou with that about which they disputed. [64]And we have come to *y*ou with the truth, and we are surely truthful. [65]So travel with *y*our followers for a part of the night, *y*ourself following behind them; and let not anyone of you turn round, and go where you are commanded. [66]And We made known to him this decree, that the roots of these should be cut off in the morning.

67 And the people of the town came rejoicing. [68]He said: These are my guests, so do not disgrace me, [69]and keep your duty to Allah and do not shame me. [70]They said: Did we not forbid *y*ou from (entertaining) people? [71]He said: These are my daughters, if you are going to do anything.[a] [72]By *y*our life! — they blindly wandered on in their frenzy. [73]So the cry overtook them at sunrise; [74]thus We turned it upside down, and rained upon them stones, as decreed. [75]Surely in this are signs for those who take a lesson. [76]And it is on a road that still abides. [77]Surely in this is a sign for the believers.

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sent back to this world; and that therefore the garden in which Adam was at first placed was not the paradise of heavenly life, for in that case he would not have been ejected from it.

a **(71)** See 11:78 footnote.

78 And the dwellers of the Grove were indeed wrongdoers: [a] **79**So We inflicted retribution on them. And they are both on an open high road.[b]

Section 6: **Dwellers of the Rock and a warning**

80 And the dwellers of the Rock indeed rejected the messengers;[c] **81**and We gave them Our messages, but they turned away from them; **82**and they carved houses in the mountains, in security. **83**So the cry overtook them in the morning; **84**and what they earned did not avail them.

85 And We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them but with truth. And the Hour is surely coming, so turn away with kindly forgiveness.[d] **86**Surely *y*our Lord — He is the Creator, the Knower. **87**And certainly We have given *y*ou seven oft-repeated (verses) and the grand Quran.[e]

88 Do not strain *y*our eyes (with desire) at what We have given certain classes of them to enjoy, nor grieve for them, and make *y*ourself gentle to the believers.[f] **89**And say: I am indeed the plain warner. **90**Like as We sent down on them who took oaths,

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a **(78)** *The dwellers of the Grove* were Shuaib's people.

b **(79)** By *both* are meant the cities of the people of Lot as well as those of Shuaib's people. The road alluded to is the road followed by caravans from the Hijaz to Syria.

c **(80)** *The dwellers of the Rock* are the people of Thamūd; see 7:73 note 1.

d **(85)** Just one of many instances of the Holy Prophet's forgiveness was at the conquest of Makkah, when, having captured the city which had most tyrannically driven him out with his followers, and whose people were guilty of shedding the innocent blood of the Muslims, he forgave all.

e **(87)** The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the "seven oft-repeated verses" were the seven verses of the *Fātiḥah,* the first chapter of the Quran (Bukhari, 65: *Surah* 1, hadith 4474). According to the same hadith, the *Fātiḥah* is called the grand Quran. It is so called because it contains the essence of the whole of the Quran.

f **(88)** The riches and embellishments of this life had no temptation for the Holy Prophet. The unequalled simplicity of his life from the time that he married a rich widow to the time that he ruled Arabia may be guessed from the last scene of his life, when he ordered the last penny in his house to be given to the poor. The verse, moreover, draws a picture of the utmost kindness and gentleness which he showed to his followers. The straining of the eyes signifies looking desirously.

91those who divided the Quran into parts. **92**So, by *y*our Lord! We shall question them all, **93**as to what they did.

94 Therefore declare openly what *y*ou are commanded, and turn away from those who set up partners (with Allah). **95**Surely We are sufficient for *y*ou against the scoffers — **96**those who set up another god with Allah; so they will come to know. **97**And We know indeed that *y*our heart is distressed at what they say; **98**so celebrate the praise of *y*our Lord, and be of those who prostrate (before Him). **99**And serve *y*our Lord, until there comes to *y*ou what is certain.[a]

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a **(99)** *What is certain* is here generally taken to mean *death* (Bukhari, 65: *Surah* 15, ch. 5), because it is the one thing which is certain to come to every creature.

Chapter 16

Al-Naḥl The Bee

This chapter is so named because the *bee,* guided by its instinct which is called "revelation" in 16:68, gathers honey from flowers by taking the best of what is in them, producing "a beverage of many colours in which there is healing for human beings" (16:69). Similarly, Divine revelation to the Holy Prophet collected the best in previous revealed teachings and presented it in the Quran, which is also called "a healing" for people (10:57).

This chapter begins by mentioning the benefits which God has conferred upon man in physical nature to show that He also bestows upon him spiritual gifts. Those who reject these gifts will come to disgrace, but God is slow to punish. Revelation is necessary, but not every person can receive it directly. The best ones are chosen for it. Revelation teaches the doing of good, and the Quran replaces previous revelation. Those who reject it are then compared to a flourishing town which is made to suffer because of the ingratitude of its people. Lastly, Muslims are given certain golden directions to follow in order to be a great nation. This chapter was revealed in the last period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Revelation testified to by Nature**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Allah's commandment will come, so do not seek to hasten it.[a] Glory be to Him, and supremely exalted is He above what they set up as partners (with Him)! **2**He sends down angels with revelation by His command on whom He pleases of His servants, saying: Give the warning that there is no God but Me, so keep your duty to Me. **3**He created the heavens and the earth with truth. Supremely exalted is He above what they set up as partners (with Him)!

4 He created man from a small life-germ,[b] and — lo! — he is an open contender. **5**And the cattle, He has created them for you. You have in them warm clothing and (other) advantages, and of

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a **(1)** The disbelievers are asked not to hasten the punishment, for Allah, Who conferred so many physical benefits on them, is willing to bestow His spiritual gifts, as mercy has the foremost place in Divine nature. This is stated in the verses that follow. What that punishment was going to be is expressly stated at the end of this chapter (v. 112).

b **(4)** The word *nutfah* used refers here to seminal fluid.

them you eat. [6]And therein is beauty for you, when you drive them back (home) and when you send them out (to pasture). [7]And they carry your heavy loads to regions which you could not reach but with distress to yourselves. Surely your Lord is Compassionate, Merciful. [8]And (He made) horses and mules and asses that you might ride upon them and as an ornament. And He creates what you do not know. [9]And upon Allah it rests to show the right way, and there are some deviating (ways). And if He please, He would guide all of you aright.

Section 2: **Nature upholds Unity**

10 He it is Who sends down water from the clouds for you; it gives drink, and by it (grow) the trees on which you feed. [11]He causes to grow for you by it vegetation, and the olives, and the date-palms, and the grapes, and all the fruits. Surely there is a sign in this for a people who reflect. [12]And He has made subservient to you the night and the day and the sun and the moon. And the stars are made subservient by His command. Surely there are signs in this for a people who understand. [13]And what He has created for you in the earth is of varied colours. Surely there is a sign in this for a people who are mindful. [14]And He it is Who has made the sea subservient that you may eat fresh flesh from it and bring forth from it ornaments which you wear. And *y*ou see the ships cleaving through it, so that you seek of His bounty and that you may give thanks. [15]And He has cast firm mountains in the earth in case it should quake with you,[a] and rivers and roads that you may go aright, [16]and landmarks. And by the stars they find the right way.

17 Is He then Who creates like him who does not create? Are you not then mindful? [18]And if you would count Allah's favours, you would not be able to number them. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. [19]And Allah knows what you conceal and what you do openly. [20]And those whom they call on besides Allah created

***a* (15)** These words seem to point to the great upheavals and the violent agitations which led to the formation of the mountains, before man's existence on earth, and, that having been effected, the convulsions are now comparatively insignificant, making life possible. But these words can also be translated as meaning that *they may be a source of benefit to you*. In accordance with this we have elsewhere: "And the mountains, He made them firm, a provision for you and for your cattle" (79:32–33).

nothing, while they are themselves created. **21**Dead (are they), not living. And they do not know when they will be raised.[a]

Section 3: **Denial due to ignorance**

22 Your God is one God: so those who do not believe in the Hereafter, their hearts refuse to know and they are proud. **23**Undoubtedly Allah knows what they conceal and what they do openly. Surely He does not love the proud. **24**And when it is said to them, What is it that your Lord has revealed, they say, Stories of the ancients! **25**That they may bear their burdens in full on the day of Resurrection, and also part of the burdens of those whom they lead astray without knowledge. Ah! Evil is what they bear.

Section 4: **The wicked will come to disgrace**

26 Those before them plotted, so Allah demolished their building from the foundations, so the roof fell down on them from above them, and the punishment came to them from where they did not perceive. **27**Then on the day of Resurrection He will bring them to disgrace and say: Where are My partners, for whose sake you became hostile? Those who are given the knowledge will say: Surely disgrace this day and evil are upon the disbelievers,[b] **28**whom the angels cause to die, while they are unjust to themselves. Then would they offer submission: We did not do any evil. Yes! Surely Allah knows what you did. **29**So enter the gates of hell, to abide in it. Evil indeed is the dwelling-place of the proud.

30 And it is said to those who guard against evil: What has your Lord revealed? They say, Good. For those who do good in this world is good. And certainly the abode of the Hereafter is better. And excellent indeed is the abode of those who keep their duty — **31**Gardens of perpetuity which they enter, in which rivers flow: they have therein what they please. Thus does Allah reward those who keep their duty, **32**whom the angels cause to die in purity, saying: Peace be on you! — enter the Garden for what you did.

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a **(21)** These two verses show conclusively that neither Jesus Christ nor any other person who is taken for a god ever created anything; and secondly, that Jesus was not alive at the time of the revelation of the Quran: *Dead are they, not living*. The further statement, that they do not even know when they will be raised, shows that the verse speaks of men taken for gods, and at any rate includes them.

b **(27)** *Disgrace* is a sort of hell-fire, which they had in this very life, too.

33 They only wait that the angels should come to them or that *y*our Lord's command should come to pass.[a] Thus did those before them. And Allah did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves. **34**So the evil of what they did afflicted them, and what they mocked at beset them.[b]

Section 5: **Prophets are raised to explain**

35 And the idolaters say: If Allah pleased we would not have served any but Him, (neither) we nor our fathers, nor would we have prohibited anything without (order from) Him. Thus did those before them. But have the messengers any duty except to deliver the message clearly?[c] **36**And certainly We raised in every nation a messenger, saying: Serve Allah and shun the devil. Then some of them Allah guided, and for some of them remaining in error was justly due.[d] So travel in the land, then see what was the end of the rejectors. **37**If *y*ou desire their guidance, yet Allah will not guide him who leads (others) astray,[e] nor do they have any helpers.

38 And they swear by Allah their most energetic oaths: Allah will not raise up him who dies. Yes indeed! It is a promise binding on Him, quite true, but most people do not know: **39**So that He might make clear to them what they differ about, and that those who disbelieve might know that they were liars. **40**Our word for a thing, when We intend it, is only that We say to it: Be; and it is.

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a **(33)** The coming of the angels stands for the smaller afflictions, such as overtook them in the form of famine and war, while the coming to pass of the command of the Lord indicates the complete overthrow of their power.

b **(34)** The past tense is used to express the highest degree of certainty relating to the future.

c **(35)** They contended that if Allah did not like evil He could have diverted them from evil ways. They are told in reply that Allah's pleasure is not exercised by compelling people to adopt one way or the other, but by sending His messengers in every age and to every nation to point out the right way to the people, and by clear messages through His messengers to warn people to avoid evil.

d **(36)** There were some people who did not care for the Prophet's warning and adhered to error. Justice therefore required that they should be left in error. The message was sent by God; the choice was man's own to accept or reject it. The words do not mean that Allah had foredoomed some people, for then the sending to them of messengers would have been absurd.

e **(37)** Those who not only walk in error themselves, but have grown so hostile to the cause of Truth that they mislead others, cannot find the right way, however much the Prophet may be anxious for them.

Section 6: **Doom of opponents is coming**

41 And those who flee for Allah's sake after they are oppressed, We shall certainly give them a good abode in the world; and the reward of the Hereafter is much greater, if only they knew [a] — **42**those who are steadfast and on their Lord they rely.

43 And We did not send before *y*ou any but men to whom We sent revelation — so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know [b] — **44**with clear arguments and Scriptures. And We have revealed to *y*ou the Reminder that *y*ou may make clear to people what has been revealed to them, and that perhaps they may reflect.

45 Are they, then, who plan evil (plans), secure that Allah will not humble them in the earth, or that punishment will not come upon them from where they do not perceive? **46**Or that He will not seize them in their going to and fro, then they will not be able to escape? **47**Or that He will not seize them with a gradual reduction?[c] Your Lord is surely Compassionate, Merciful. **48**Do they not see everything that Allah has created? Its (very) shadows return from right and left, making submission to Allah, while they are in utter humility. **49**And to Allah submits every living creature that is in the heavens and that is in the earth, and the angels (too) and they are not proud. **50**They fear their Lord above them and do what they are commanded.

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a **(41)** Here is a clear prophecy regarding those Muslims who had to flee their homes on account of the persecutions of the Quraish. They are promised not only a reward of the Hereafter but *a good abode in this world, too*. Those who fled their homes in utter helplessness, and were in danger of their very lives, were given the clearest promise of a great future in this life, and this promise proved true despite the hard struggle of a powerful nation to exterminate Islam.

b **(43)** By the followers of the *Reminder* are generally understood the Jews and the Christians, to whom the disbelievers of the Quraish are referred. But the mention in the very next verse of the *Reminder* being sent to the Holy Prophet shows that the words apply to the Muslims. Some commentators take the words generally as meaning learned men.

c **(47)** As verses 41–42 speak of a prosperous future for those who accepted the truth and now were suffering the severest persecutions, verses 45–47 speak prophetically of the different forms of punishment to which the persecutors of the righteous were to be subjected, v. 47 stating that they would be reduced gradually. This was their end, as their power went on waning till the whole of Arabia bowed before Islam.

Section 7: **Human nature revolts against polytheism**

51 And Allah has said: Do not take two gods. He is only one God: So Me alone should you fear. **52**And whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His, and to Him is obedience due always. Will you then fear other than Allah? **53**And whatever good you have, it is from Allah; then, when evil afflicts you, to Him do you cry for aid. **54**Then when He removes the evil from you — lo! — some of you set up partners with their Lord, **55**so as to deny what We have given them. Then enjoy yourselves, for soon will you know. **56**And they set apart for what they do not know,[a] a portion of what We have given them. By Allah! — you shall certainly be questioned about what you forged.

57 And they ascribe daughters to Allah. Glory be to Him! And for themselves is what they desire! **58**And when the birth of a daughter is announced to one of them, his face becomes dark and he is full of wrath. **59**He hides himself from the people because of the evil of what is announced to him. Shall he keep it with disgrace or bury it (alive) in the dust? Now surely evil is what they judge![b] **60**For those who do not believe in the Hereafter are evil attributes, and Allah's are the sublime attributes. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.

Section 8: **Wrongdoing of deniers**

61 And if Allah were to destroy people for their wrongdoing, He would not leave on it a single creature, but He gives them respite till an appointed time. So when their doom comes they cannot postpone it an hour, nor (can they) bring it forward. **62**And they ascribe to Allah what they (themselves) hate,[c] and their tongues

***a* (56)** That is, for the idols or their gods, whom they ignorantly take for intercessors.

***b* (59)** The allusion is to the barbarous custom of burying daughters alive, which was prevalent among the Arabs, especially among their chiefs. Its abolition was one of the numerous blessings of Islam. With no physical or administrative power behind it to ensure its enforcement, the word of Allah swept away this deep-rooted custom as if by a magician's wand, so that not a single case of the burial of a living girl ever occurred after the mandate came. Attention is drawn to the inconsistency of their avowed beliefs with their inward convictions in v. 62.

***c* (62)** The reference is to their ascribing daughters to Allah, while they

relate the lie that for them is good. Assuredly for them is the Fire, and they will be abandoned (in it). **63**By Allah! We certainly sent (messengers) to nations before *y*ou, but the devil made their deeds seem good to them. So he is their patron today, and for them is a painful punishment. **64**And We have not revealed to *y*ou the Book except that *y*ou may make clear to them what they differ about, and (as) a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe.[a] **65**And Allah sends down water from above, and with it gives life to the earth after its death.[b] Surely there is a sign in this for a people who listen.

Section 9: **Parables showing truth of Revelation**

66 And surely there is a lesson for you in the cattle: We give you to drink of what is in their bellies — from between the faeces and the blood — pure milk, agreeable to the drinkers. **67**And of the fruits of the palms and the grapes, you obtain from them intoxicants and goodly provision. There is surely a sign in this for a people who ponder.[c]

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themselves did not like to have a daughter, thus showing how obviously inconsistent with their inward convictions was their professed belief in the Divine Being.

a **(64)** The previous verse shows that the whole world was in the grip of the devil at the advent of the Prophet. Messengers were sent to all nations before the coming of the Prophet, but as time passed, the followers of the messengers, instead of following their teachings, followed evil ways, which gradually appeared to them so beautiful that the good of this world was all in all for them. This verse shows that the teachings of the previous prophets had been distorted to such an extent that a new Prophet was now needed to lead them aright. Truth could not now be discovered without light from heaven. It also establishes that the new Prophet's message was for the followers of all religions; in other words, for the whole world.

b **(65)** The water from heaven is the Divine revelation, the death of the earth is its corruption, and the giving of life signifies its spiritual awakening, marvellous signs of which had already appeared in Arabia.

c **(67)** Verses 66 and 67 compare the Divine laws as manifested in nature with the handiwork of man. Divine law in nature produces such a valuable and agreeable diet as pure milk, separating it from the other elements — blood and dung — to which food is reduced in the belly of an animal, which the hand of man is unable to do. On the other hand, the most agreeable provisions produced by nature in the form of fruits are turned into such a poisonous drug as alcohol by the hand of man. The two illustrations thus point out that just as Divine laws working in the physical world produce the purest and most agreeable diets, separating them from obnoxious elements and useless excrements, so their working in the spiritual world produces the most sublime moral teachings, which afford

68 And *y*our Lord revealed to the bee: Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build, **69**then eat of all the fruits and walk in the ways of *y*our Lord submissively. From their bellies comes forth a beverage of many colours, in which there is healing for man. Surely in this there is a sign for a people who reflect.[a] **70**And Allah creates you, then He causes you to die; and some of you are brought back to the worst part of life, knowing nothing after having knowledge. Surely Allah is Knowing, Powerful.[b]

Section 10: **The recipient of Revelation**

71 And Allah has made some of you excel others in the means of subsistence; so those who are made to excel do not give away their sustenance to those whom their right hands possess, so that they may be equal in it. Will they then deny the favour of Allah? [c]

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to man the purest spiritual diet. But the best teachings given by Divine revelation are likely to be corrupted by the hands of man, as the best of fruits is turned into such an obnoxious thing as alcohol.

***a* (69)** This is another illustration to show that Divine revelation brings about an object which cannot be effected by human exertions. The bee gathers the sweet juice of different flowers, making it into honey. What this small creature effects, working instinctively in obedience to Divine laws, cannot be effected by the combined exertions of the whole of humanity. This illustration shows a similar working of the Divine laws in the spiritual world, viz., that the Prophet, working, as it were, instinctively in obedience to the Divine laws prevailing in the spiritual world, collects by Divine revelation all that is best and noblest in any religion, and sums it up in the Quran: a work which could not be effected by human exertion.

It should be noted that five kinds of the *waḥy* (revelation) of Allah are mentioned in the Quran: a revelation to inanimate objects, as *the earth* (99:5) or *the heavens* (41:12); a revelation to living creatures other than man, as *the bee;* a revelation to the angels (8:12); a revelation to men and women other than prophets, as the apostles of Jesus (5:111) or the mother of Moses (28:7); and a revelation to prophets and messengers. All these kinds of *waḥy* are not identical; in the case of the *bee,* it is its very *instinct* that is a revelation to it. The revelation to the prophets is the expression of Divine will for the guidance of people.

***b* (70)** As in individuals, so in nations. Those who had been given knowledge of Divine revelation before the Holy Prophet had lost or corrupted it at the time of his advent; hence the necessity for a new Divine revelation.

***c* (71)** This provides an answer to the demand of the disbelievers expressly stated elsewhere: "We will not believe till we are given the like of what Allah's messengers are given" (6:124). It is pointed out that, as there are differences in

72 And Allah has made wives for you from among yourselves,[a] and has given you sons and daughters from your wives, and has provided you with good things. Will they then believe in falsehood and deny the favour of Allah?[b]

73 And they serve besides Allah that which controls for them no sustenance at all from the heavens and the earth; nor have they any power. 74 So do not coin likenesses for Allah. Surely Allah knows and you do not know. 75 Allah sets forth a parable: There is a slave, the property of another, controlling nothing, and there is one to whom We have granted from Ourselves a goodly provision, so he spends from it (on good works) secretly and openly. Are the two alike? Praise be to Allah! But most of them do not know.[c] 76 And Allah sets forth a parable of two men: One of them dumb, controlling nothing, and he is a burden to his master; wherever he sends him, he brings no good. Is he equal with him who enjoins justice, and he is on the right path? [d]

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the physical world, so there are differences in the spiritual world. All persons are not equally fit to receive the gift of Divine revelation. *The favour of Allah,* which is the *Divine revelation,* should not be denied simply because all individuals are not equal recipients of it.

***a* (72-1)** The statement made here is that for all men wives are created from their *anfus* (plural of *nafs,* meaning *soul* or *self*). No one ever interprets these words in the erroneous way in which similar words about Adam are misinterpreted, where the *rib* is made to take the place of *soul* or *self*. The words of the Quran do not allow this unnatural interpretation, which is based upon the story of Genesis.

***b* (72-2)** They believe in the superstition that the idols, which are inanimate objects, can intercede with Allah, and deny the favour of Allah (i.e., Divine revelation) being granted to a human being. Hence the next verse speaks of the idols.

***c* (75)** By slave is meant the idol-worshipper who, instead of being master of idols, stones, and such-like objects, as Allah has created him to be, chooses to become a slave to them, bows before them, and considers them more powerful than himself. By the master of the goodly provision from Allah is meant the recipient of the Divine revelation, i.e., the Prophet. The comparison is made to show that the idol-worshippers will ultimately find themselves deprived of all power.

***d* (76)** This parable makes the same comparison as the previous one. The purport is here made clearer. The *master of the goodly provision from Allah* of the previous verse is here plainly called the *enjoiner of justice and the one who is on the right path,* while the idol-worshipper is the *one who is not able to do anything and who remains unsuccessful in whatever he undertakes* — a prophetical allusion to the defeats and discomfiture of the idolaters.

Section 11: **Punishment withheld**

77 And Allah's is the unseen of the heavens and the earth. And the matter of the Hour is but as a twinkling of the eye or it is nearer still.[a] Surely Allah is Powerful over all things. **78**And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers — you knew nothing — and He gave you hearing and sight and hearts that you might give thanks.

79 Do they not see the birds, constrained in the middle of the sky? None withholds them but Allah.[b] Surely there are signs in this for a people who believe. **80**And Allah has given you an abode in your houses, and He has given you houses of the skins of cattle, which you find light to carry on the day of your march and on the day of your halting, and of their wool and their fur and their hair, household stuff and a provision for a time. **81**And Allah has made for you, out of what He has created, shelters, and He has given you in the mountains, places of retreat, and He has given you garments to save you from the heat,[c] and (protective) garments to save you in your fighting. Thus does He complete His favour to you that you may submit.[d] **82**Then if they turn away, *y*our duty is only to deliver the message clearly. **83**They recognize the favour of Allah, yet they deny it, and most of them are ungrateful.

Section 12: **Prophets testify**

84 And on the day when We raise up a witness out of every

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a **(77)** By *the unseen* is meant *the knowledge of the unseen,* or the knowledge of the eventual fulfilment of the prophecies; and by *the Hour* is meant *the hour of the doom* of the opponents of the Prophet, the hour when their power was to be utterly destroyed.

b **(79)** Both Arab proverb and Arab poetry bear witness to *birds* being spoken of as attending a victorious army to feed upon the corpses of the enemy left on the battlefield. In withholding the birds, therefore, there may be a reference to withholding the punishment which must ultimately overtake the enemy.

c **(81-1)** The mention of one of two contrary things always involves the other. Hence by the preservation from heat spoken of here, preservation from heat and cold alike is meant.

d **(81-2)** As He has given you of the good things of this life, the physical blessings, He now completes these blessings by giving you the greatest of His blessings, i.e., Divine revelation, so that, submitting to it, you may prosper.

nation,[a] then permission (to offer excuse) will not be given to the disbelievers, nor will they be allowed to make amends. **85**And when the wrongdoers see the punishment, it will not be lightened for them, nor will they be given respite. **86**And when those who set up partners (with Allah) see their associate-gods, they will say: Our Lord, these are our associate-gods on whom we called besides You. But they will throw back at them the word: Surely you are liars. **87**And they will tender submission to Allah on that day, and what they used to forge will fail them.

88 Those who disbelieve and hinder (people) from Allah's way, We will add punishment to their punishment because they made mischief. **89**And on the day when We raise up in every people a witness against them from among themselves, and bring *y*ou as a witness against these.[b] And We have revealed the Book to *y*ou explaining all things,[c] and a guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit.

Section 13: **Revelation enjoins good**

90 Surely Allah commands (the doing of) justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the near of kin, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion. He instructs you that you may be mindful.[d] **91**And fulfil the covenant of Allah, when you have made

***a* (84)** In this verse, as well as in the concluding verse (v. 89) of this section, the broad humanitarian doctrine is taught that a prophet has been raised in every nation. There are religions which claim hundreds of prophets for a single nation, like the house of Israel, but grudge even a single true prophet to other vast countries and nations. Islam rejects all such narrow views of the spiritual providence of Allah, Who is not the "Lord God of Israel", but the Lord of all nations.

***b* (89-1)** By *these* are meant the Muslim community throughout the world and in all ages.

***c* (89-2)** By *everything* is meant every basic principle necessary for the spiritual welfare of man. The *sunnah,* the practice of the Prophet, as illustrating the precepts of the Quran, supplies the details.

***d* (90)** This verse deals with the different degrees of goodness and evil. The lowest form of goodness is justice or returning good for good, and includes not only justice proper but also the fulfilment of all duties and obligations. A higher degree of goodness is, however, that which is called *iḥsān,* or goodness proper, the doing of good without having received any benefit. The last stage of goodness is that in which a person's nature is so inclined to good that he does good to all people as an ordinary man does good to his own near of kin. In fact, he looks upon the whole of humanity as his kindred.

a covenant, and do not break (your) oaths after making them firm, and you have indeed made Allah your surety. Surely Allah knows what you do.

92 And do not be like her who unravels her yarn, disintegrating it into pieces, after she has spun it strongly.[a] You make your oaths to be means of deceit between you because (one) nation is more numerous than (another) nation.[b] Allah only tries you by this. And He will certainly make clear to you on the day of Resurrection what you differed about. **93**And if Allah please, He would make you a single nation, but He leaves in error whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases. And certainly you will be questioned as to what you did. **94**And do not make your oaths a means of deceit between you, so that a foot should slip after its stability, and you should taste evil because you hinder (people) from Allah's way and severe punishment be your (lot). **95**And do not take a small price for Allah's covenant. Surely what is with Allah is better for you, if only you knew! **96**What is with you passes away and what is with Allah is enduring. And We shall certainly give to those who are patient their reward for the best of what they did. **97**Whoever does good, whether male or female,[c] and is a believer, We shall certainly make him live a good life, and We shall certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did.

98 So when you recite the Quran, seek refuge in Allah from the accursed devil. **99**Surely he has no authority over those who believe and rely on their Lord. **100** His authority is only over those who befriend him and those who set up partners with Him (their Lord).

Similarly, this verse deals with the three degrees of evil: the merest indecency which may not affect the rights of others, evil actions which affect the rights of other individuals, and oppression or rebellion affecting the rights of large numbers, nations or states.

***a* (92-1)** People, after accepting the truth, are united by certain ties, but when this union brings about strength, they destroy it with their own hands. It was unity which made the Muslims rise to great power, but that unity today lies in ruins, and the strong community of Islam is like the unravelled yarn of a crazy spinner.

***b* (92-2)** Faithfulness to covenants is here stressed and, from the covenant with God, the subject is diverted to covenants between people. Attention is drawn in the words, *you make your oaths to be means of deceit between you,* to the conditions generally prevailing in the world, to the breach of covenants between nations, which is ruining the stability of human society.

***c* (97)** The doers of good, both men and women, are made to lead a good life in this world and will have a reward in the Hereafter.

Section 14: **The Quran is not a forgery**

101 And when We change a message for a message — and Allah knows best what He reveals — they say: *Y*ou are only a forger. Rather, most of them do not know.[a] **102**Say: The Holy Spirit has revealed it from *y*our Lord with truth,[b] that it may establish those who believe, and as a guidance and good news for those who submit. **103**And indeed We know that they say: Only a mortal teaches him. The tongue of him whom they hint at is foreign, and this is clear Arabic language.[c] **104**Those who do not believe in Allah's messages, Allah does not guide them, and for them is a painful punishment. **105**Only they forge lies who do not believe in Allah's messages, and they are the liars.[d]

106 Whoever disbelieves in Allah after his belief — not he who is compelled while his heart is content with faith, but he who opens (his) breast for disbelief — they incur Allah's displeasure, and for them is a grievous punishment.[e] **107**That is because they love this world's life more than the Hereafter, and because Allah does not

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a **(101)** It is not the change of the Quranic verses that is spoken of here; it is the change of the previous messages sent through former prophets for the message of the Holy Quran. This chapter belongs to Makkah, and the upholders of abrogation have never asserted that any verse was abrogated while the Holy Prophet was at Makkah. Moreover, it was the revelation of the Quran itself that was called a forgery, and not an occasional change that any of its commandments could have undergone, with which change the disbelievers had, in fact, no concern. See also 2:106 footnote.

b **(102)** The Holy Spirit (*Rūḥ al-qudus*) is here stated to be the bearer of the revelation to the Holy Prophet; elsewhere the same bearer is called *al-Rūḥ al-Amīn,* or the *Faithful Spirit* (26:193), and the same is called Gabriel in 2:97.

c **(103)** Various names have been suggested as to the person whom the opponents of the Prophet referred to. These are mostly the names of Christian slaves, who were not Arabs. All these slaves were among the early converts to Islam, who were most cruelly persecuted by the Quraish, yet they remained firm under the severest tortures. Is it possible that they, without being in the least gainers, should have thus willingly suffered persecutions for a cause which they knew to be false? This is sufficient to show the absurdity of the allegation, and it is to this that v. 105 refers. They certainly cannot be supposed to have been the authors of the sublime themes of the Holy Quran.

d **(105)** The reference is to v. 103. The allegation was that certain slaves taught the Prophet. How could a forger of lies be a believer, especially when he had to undergo the severest trials for its sake.

e **(106)** Only very rare instances are met with in the early history of Islam in which converts even under compulsion ever recanted.

guide the disbelieving people. **108**These are they whose hearts and ears and eyes Allah has sealed, and these are the heedless ones.[a] **109**No doubt that in the Hereafter they are the losers. **110**Then surely *y*our Lord, to those who flee after they are persecuted, then struggle hard and are patient, surely *y*our Lord after that is Protecting, Merciful.[b]

Section 15: **Fate of the opponents**

111 On the day when every soul will come pleading for itself, and every soul will be paid in full what it has done, and they will not be dealt with unjustly. **112**And Allah sets forth a parable: A town safe and secure, to which its means of subsistence came in abundance from every quarter; but it disbelieved in Allah's favours, so Allah made it taste a pall of hunger and fear because of what they did.[c] **113**And certainly a Messenger came to them from among them, but they rejected him, so the punishment caught them while they were wrongdoers.

114 So eat of what Allah has given you, lawful and good (things), and give thanks for Allah's favour, if He it is you serve. **115**He has forbidden you only what dies of itself and blood and the

***a* (108)** Allah does not seal the hearts of people and thus hinder them from accepting the truth; it is they who reject the truth, turning a deaf ear to the preaching of the Prophet, as the previous verses show. Nor are the hearts sealed forever, for, as v. 110 shows, even after that Allah forgives them, if they repent and show perseverance.

***b* (110)** The struggle (*jihād*) spoken of here is certainly not in connection with fighting, for the verse was revealed at Makkah. Note also that God is spoken of here as being *Ghafūr,* translated as *Protecting,* to those who flee from their homes on account of persecution and then struggle hard to establish Truth. God being *Ghafūr* here is in relation to His exalting them by protecting them from the commission of sins, not forgiving of sins, for it is their acts of sacrifice that are spoken of here, not their sins.

***c* (112)** The parable is set forth to depict the state of Makkah as it was before the time of the Holy Prophet and, prophetically, its fate after he was rejected, *after it disbelieved in Allah's favours*. Its first condition was one of great prosperity and affluence, as referred to in 106:3–4. When the Prophet and his followers were persecuted and tortured, a famine overtook them, which destroyed everything, till they ate skins and dead animals. This was the *pall of hunger,* spoken of here. But, even then, they did not stop persecution and tried to exterminate Islam by the sword. The result was that all their attacks on Madinah failed, and ultimately Makkah itself lay powerless when attacked by the Prophet. This was the *pall of fear,* being so called because no blood was shed.

flesh of swine and that on which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked; but whoever is driven to (it), not desiring nor exceeding the limit, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[a] **116**And do not utter the lie which your tongues describe: This is lawful and this unlawful; so that you forge a lie against Allah. Surely those who forge a lie against Allah will not prosper. **117**A little enjoyment — and for them is a painful punishment. **118**And to those who are Jews We prohibited what We have related to *y*ou already, and We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves. **119**And surely *y*our Lord, for those who do evil in ignorance, then turn after that and make amends, surely *y*our Lord after that is Forgiving, Merciful.

Section 16: **The way to greatness**

120 Surely Abraham was a model (of virtue), obedient to Allah, upright, and he was not from among the idolaters, **121**grateful for His favours. He chose him and guided him on the right path. **122**And We gave him good in this world; and in the Hereafter he is surely among the righteous.

123 Then We revealed to *y*ou: Follow the faith of Abraham, the upright one; and he was not from among the idolaters. **124**The Sabbath was ordained only against those who differed about it.[b] And surely *y*our Lord will judge between them on the day of Resurrection in that in which they differed.

125 Call to the way of *y*our Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the best manner.[c] Surely *y*our

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a **(115)** See 2:173, 6:145 and 5:3, and the footnotes there.

b **(124)** The meaning here seems to be that the Sabbath, the Jewish day of worship which should have made them walk in the footsteps of righteous Abraham, was turned against them because of their violation of it. Or, the statement is made to show that it was not necessary for the Muslims to observe a day of worship, as even Abraham, a model of virtue for both the Jews and the Muslims, did not observe a particular day of worship.

c **(125)** The principle laid down for preaching and religious controversy by the Quran has yet to be learned by the most advanced people. It shows the breadth of mind of the Holy Prophet, more especially when it is remembered that the injunction was given at a time when Muslims were being most severely persecuted and there was the greatest reason for adopting a harsh attitude.

Lord knows best him who strays from His path, and He knows best those who go aright. **126**And if you take your turn, then retaliate with the like of what you were afflicted with.[a] But if you show patience, it is certainly best for the patient. **127**And be patient and *y*our patience is not but by (the help of) Allah, and do not grieve for them, nor be in distress by what they plan. **128**Surely Allah is with those who keep their duty and those who do good (to others).

a **(126)** Muslims were being persecuted most cruelly, and they were told that the time would come when they would dominate their erstwhile persecutors. In that case they are allowed to punish them for their guilt, but it is twice added, here and in v. 127, that they should show patience when they had the upper hand and do good even to their enemies, for Allah is with those who do good (v. 128).

Chapter 17

Banī Isrā'īl The Israelites

This chapter opens and ends by referring to the history of the Israelites, who, after attaining to greatness, were twice punished for their misdeeds. It begins with a mention of the *Mi'rāj* or Ascension of the Holy Prophet, indicative of the eminence to which the Muslims would rise. It then warns Muslims of the fate which befell the Israelites, as the same fate was to befall them. Then it goes on to deal with the following subjects: every deed must have a consequence, the moral teachings Muslims must follow to do good deeds, opposition to the truth and to the righteous, and its defeat by the truth — that "truth" being the Holy Prophet himself who is the "spirit of truth" prophesied in the Gospel of John — the Quran being a miracle, and, finally, Moses' warning to Pharaoh, a warning like it now being given by the Quran to its opponents. This chapter was revealed in the early period at Makkah, around the fifth year of the Holy Prophet's mission.

Section 1: **Israelites punished twice**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Part 15

1 Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Mosque, whose precincts We blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs![a] Surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

2 And We gave Moses the Book and made it a guidance to the Children of Israel (saying): Take no guardian beside Me[b] —

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a **(1)** The carrying by night of the Holy Prophet Muhammad from the Sacred Mosque at Makkah to the Remote Mosque at Jerusalem (known as *Isrā'*) is in reference to the Prophet's reported Ascension (known as *Mi'rāj*). *Isrā'* was the first stage in the *Mi'rāj,* as before his Ascension to heaven the Holy Prophet was taken to the Remote Mosque, or the Temple at Jerusalem. The Ascension was not a translation of the body, but the spiritual experience of the Holy Prophet, as is shown in v. 60 where it is expressly called a *vision*. As the significance of the Ascension was the spiritual eminence of the Holy Prophet and indicated his triumph in the world, his being carried to the Temple at Jerusalem signified that he would also inherit the blessings of the Israelite prophets.

b **(2)** The first verse really prophesies a great future for Islam and the Muslims, while this warns them of the pitfalls of greatness, citing the instance of a nation that had been made to rise to eminence before them.

3(you) the offspring of those whom We bore with Noah. Surely he was a grateful servant. **4**And We made known to the Children of Israel in the Book: Certainly you will make mischief in the land twice, and behave insolently with mighty arrogance.[a] **5**So when the first warning of the two came to pass, We raised against you Our servants, of mighty prowess, so they made havoc in (your) houses. And it was an accomplished threat. **6**Then We gave you back the turn against them, and aided you with wealth and children and made you a numerous band.[b] **7**If you do good, you do good for your own souls. And if you do evil, it is for them. So when the second warning came, (We raised another people) that they might bring you to grief and that they might enter the Mosque as they entered it the first time, and that they might destroy, whatever they conquered, with utter destruction.[c] **8**It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you. And if you return (to mischief), We will return (to punishment).[d] And We have made hell a prison for the disbelievers.

9 Surely this Quran guides to what is most upright, and gives good news to the believers who do good that theirs is a great reward, **10**and that those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have prepared for them a painful punishment.

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a **(4)** Jerusalem was destroyed twice as a punishment for the transgressions of the Jews, once by the Babylonians, and again by the Romans. See Jesus' warning in Matthew 23:38 and Luke 21:24 and various other like references. The Psalms are also replete with warnings.

b **(6)** V. 5 relates the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem and the murder, imprisonment, and banishment of the Jews by the Babylonians in the year 588 B.C., while v. 6 relates to the return of the Jews and rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel, and to their subsequent prosperity.

c **(7)** This verse describes the destruction of the Temple a second time, which was accomplished by the Romans under Titus. There is a prophetical reference here to the history of the Muslims. The Caliphate of Islam was destroyed twice, first by the Mongols under Hulagu in 656 A.H. (1258 C.E.), and again by the powers of Europe after the First World War. But while in the case of the Israelites their spiritual centre was laid waste on both occasions, the spiritual centre of Islam, the Ka'bah, has remained intact on both occasions under a Divine promise. Following the first great reverse in Muslim history in 1258, Islam gained spiritual conquests in the coming over to Islam *en masse* of the Mongols and Turks. After the second reverse, the afflictions of Islam are giving birth to a spiritual resuscitation of the world. On both occasions, there has been a revival of its temporal power as well.

d **(8)** This relates to the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, when the Israelites were again given a chance to reform, but they are told that if they return to mischief they will again be punished.

Section 2: **Every deed has a consequence**

11 And man prays for evil as he ought to pray for good; and man is ever hasty. **12**And We made the night and the day two signs, then We have made the sign of the night to pass away and We have made the sign of the day manifest,[a] so that you may seek grace from your Lord, and that you may know the numbering of years and the reckoning. And We have explained everything distinctly. **13**And We have made every human being's actions to cling to his neck, and We shall bring forth to him on the day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open.[b] **14**Read *y*our book. *Y*our own soul is sufficient as a reckoner against *y*ou this day.[c] **15**Whoever goes aright, goes aright only for the good of his own soul; and whoever goes astray, goes astray only to its detriment. And no bearer of a burden can bear the burden of another.[d] Nor do We punish until We raise a messenger.[e]

16 And when We wish to destroy a town, We send commandments to its people who lead easy lives, but they transgress therein; thus the word proves true against it, so We destroy it with

***a* (12)** The night stands for the darkness of ignorance and unbelief (see 2:257), and the passing away of the night indicates that ignorance will vanish and the light of Islam will take its place. Arabia witnessed this sign in the seventh century C.E., and Islam has since then been gradually advancing in the world.

***b* (13)** This verse reveals the principle that every action produces an effect which is made to cling to a person, and that this very effect will be met with on the day of Resurrection in the form of a wide open book. It is thus by leaving its effect behind that every action is recorded, and this very effect constitutes the book of a person's actions. Clinging to the neck indicates the inseparability of one thing from another, thus establishing the law of cause and effect.

***c* (14)** This verse throws a flood of light on the nature of the reckoning on the day of Resurrection, showing clearly that it is nothing but a complete manifestation of the effects of the deeds done in this life.

***d* (15-1)** This verse strikes at the root of the doctrine of atonement. The burden of the sins of one person cannot be taken away by another, for, as already stated, the effect of each man's actions clings to himself.

***e* (15-2)** Here it is stated that guidance is offered to man through a messenger of God, but if he still persists in error and strays from the path, it is to his own detriment. And then it is added that the punishment of the Hereafter is only after man has been warned through a Divine messenger. The law as to punishment in this world is stated in v. 16, which speaks of the destruction of towns, for such punishment is sent when tyranny and transgression assume extraordinary proportions, and punishment is then inflicted on large numbers.

utter destruction.[a] **17**And how many generations did We destroy after Noah! And *y*our Lord is sufficient as being Aware and Seer of His servants' sins. **18**Whoever desires this transitory life, We hasten to him in it what We please for whomsoever We desire, then We assign to him hell; he will enter it despised, driven away. **19**And whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it with due striving and is a believer — those are they whose striving is amply rewarded. **20**All do We aid — these as well as those — out of the bounty of *y*our Lord, and the bounty of *y*our Lord is not limited.

21 See how We have made some of them to excel others. And certainly the Hereafter is greater in degrees and greater in excellence. **22**Do not set up any other god with Allah, or *y*ou will sit down despised, forsaken.

Section 3: **Moral precepts**

23 And *y*our Lord has decreed that you serve none but Him, and do good to parents.[b] If either or both of them reach old age with *y*ou, do not say to them: "Enough (of you)," nor rebuke them, and speak to them a generous word. **24**And make *y*ourself gentle to them with humility out of mercy, and say: My Lord, have mercy on them, as they brought me up (when I was) little.

25 Your Lord knows best what is in your minds. If you are righteous, He is surely Forgiving to those who turn (to Him). **26**And give to the near of kin his due and (to) the needy and the traveller, and do not squander wastefully. **27**Surely the squanderers are the devil's brethren. And the devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord.[c] **28**And if *y*ou (have to) turn away from them (in order) to seek mercy from *y*our Lord that *y*ou hope for, then speak to them a

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a **(16)** Allah does not command people to transgress. The meaning is clear: Allah sends them commandments to do good, pointing out the right way through His prophets, but as they are accustomed to lead easy lives, they transgress those commandments, and are therefore punished.

b **(23)** Doing good to parents is placed next to submission to Allah, for among fellow-beings none has a greater claim upon a person than his parents.

c **(27)** While enjoining charity, the Quran also draws attention to economy, thus indicating the golden mean. Those who waste wealth are called the devil's brethren, because they are ungrateful to God for wasting away what He has given them out of His grace.

gentle word.[a] **29**And do not make *y*our hand to be chained to *y*our neck, nor stretch it forth to its fullest extension, so that *y*ou sit down blamed, stripped off.[b] **30**Surely *y*our Lord amplifies provision for whom He pleases, and restricts (it also). Surely He is ever Aware, Seer, of His servants.

Section 4: **Moral precepts**

31 And do not kill your children for fear of poverty — We provide for them and for you. Surely the killing of them is a great wrong.[c] **32**And do not go near to fornication: surely it is an obscenity. And evil is the way.[d] **33**And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden except for a just cause. And whoever is killed unjustly, We have indeed given to his heir authority — but let him not exceed the limit in killing. Surely he will be helped.[e]

34 And do not draw near to the orphan's property, except in the best way, till he attains his maturity. And fulfil the promise; surely the promise will be enquired into. **35**And give full measure when you measure out, and weigh with a true balance. This is fair and better in the end. **36**And do not follow that of which *y*ou have no knowledge.[f] Surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of

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a **(28)** *Hoping for mercy from the Lord* means standing in need of the bounty of the Lord, i.e., *not having anything to give to the needy.* In that case one should still speak to the needy gently. A saying of the Holy Prophet declares a gentle word spoken to someone to be a deed of charity (Bukhari, 56:72, hadith 2891).

b **(29)** By the hand being tied to the neck is meant being miserly, and by stretching it forth to its fullest extension is meant being wasteful. The verse teaches that the middle path should be adopted in one's ordinary expenses.

c **(31)** Infanticide, in the case of daughters, was met with among the Arabs, but this was not for fear of poverty. Since the word children (*aulād*) includes both males and females, the *killing of children* here may mean *not giving them proper education;* ignorance, or intellectual death, being treated as death. (*Editor's Note:* Abortion without a medical reason may also be included here.)

d **(32)** The Quran not only forbids all out-of-wedlock sex, but enjoins people not to go near it, thus avoiding all those opportunities which are likely to tempt one to fall into the evil. Hence it is that Islam discourages the too free intermingling of the sexes.

e **(33)** The words *he will be helped* indicate that as the state is bound to help him by bringing the murderer within reach of the law, the heir should not take the law into his own hands. This is called exceeding the limits.

f **(36)** If this injunction were followed, all society gossip would immediately

these will be asked about it. **37**And do not go about in the land exultingly, for *y*ou cannot split the earth, nor reach the mountains in height. **38**All this, the evil of it, is hateful in the sight of *y*our Lord.

39 This is from the wisdom which *y*our Lord has revealed to *y*ou. And do not set up with Allah any other god, or *y*ou would be thrown into hell, blamed, cast away. **40**Has then your Lord preferred to give you sons, and (for Himself) taken daughters from among the angels? Surely you utter a terrible saying.

Section 5: **Disbelievers grow harder**

41 And certainly We have repeated (warnings) in this Quran that they may be mindful. And it only adds to their aversion.[a] **42**Say: If there were with Him gods, as they say, then certainly they would have been able to seek a way to the Lord of the Throne.[b] **43**Glory be to Him, and He is supremely exalted above what they say! **44**The seven heavens and the earth and those in them declare His glory. And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification. Surely He is Forbearing, Forgiving.[c]

45 And when *y*ou recite the Quran, We place between *y*ou and those who do not believe in the Hereafter a hidden barrier;[d] **46**and We put coverings on their hearts and a deafness in their ears that they may not understand it; and when *y*ou mention *y*our Lord alone

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cease, relieving many innocent people of the heart-burning which they suffer on account of evil and unfounded reports. The verse also forbids entering into discussions without accurate knowledge, or putting forward uncertain opinion.

a **(41)** Allah's purpose in repeating arguments and signs in the Quran is to make people mindful, but the more they are reminded, the greater is their aversion to it.

b **(42)** The idol-worshippers were sunk deep in vices and immorality, while access to the Divine Being — *a way to the Lord of the Throne* — which they claimed they got through their idols, should have purified their lives. Or, the meaning is that, if they had access to God, Who holds all power in His hands, they should have received Divine help and been successful in uprooting Islam.

c **(44)** The whole universe is here mentioned as declaring the glory of Allah, which means *declaring God to be free from every imperfection and impurity,* or *from everything derogatory to His dignity*. This declaration need not be with the tongue and in words: in fact, the very dependence of the whole creation on the Creator and its consequent imperfection is a glorification of the Creator.

d **(45)** This hidden barrier is nothing but that erected by their own aversion, as plainly indicated in v. 41.

in the Quran, they turn their backs in aversion.[a] **47**We know best what they listen to when they listen to *y*ou, and when they take counsel secretly, when the wrongdoers say: You follow only a man deprived of reason. **48**See, what they liken *y*ou to! So they have gone astray, and cannot find the way.

49 And they say: When we are bones and decayed particles, shall we then be raised up as a new creation? **50**Say: Be stones or iron, **51**or some other creature of those which are too hard (to receive life) in your minds![b] But they will say: Who will return us? Say: He Who created you at first. Still they will shake their heads at *y*ou and say: When will it be? Say: Maybe it has drawn near.[c] **52**On the day when He will call you forth, then will you obey Him, giving Him praise, and you will think that you remained only a little (while).

Section 6: **Punishment must follow**

53 And say to My servants that they speak what is best. Surely the devil sows dissensions among them. The devil is surely an open enemy to man.[d] **54**Your Lord knows you best. He will have mercy on you, if He please, or He will punish you, if He please.[e] And We have not sent *y*ou as being in charge of them. **55**And *y*our Lord best

***a* (46)** The placing of coverings on the hearts and deafness in the ears of the disbelievers is no doubt attributed to Allah as the prime cause of all things, but this covering and deafness is directly brought about because they do not even listen to the mention of Allah, and flee in aversion from His word. Allah brings it about on account of the condition of their very hearts and ears. See also 7:179.

***b* (51-1)** They are told that a life after death must follow even if they could change themselves into stones. And the spiritual life with which they were quickened by the Holy Prophet, despite their hard-heartedness — "they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness" (2:74) — was a clear proof of this.

***c* (51-2)** The answer, *maybe it has drawn near,* refers to the spiritual resuscitation of Arabia, which was now to be accomplished through the Holy Prophet, as an indication of the greater Resurrection. The next verse makes it clear: *Then will you obey Him, giving Him praise.* Fifteen years after this the whole of Arabia resounded with Divine praises.

***d* (53)** The Muslims — My servants — are here enjoined to be very kind when they speak to the disbelievers. It is related that when the Muslims complained to the Holy Prophet that they were abused by the idolaters, they were told to be kind and not to retaliate. It was the devil that was causing these quarrels. The words evidently imply that these dissensions were only transient, and that the two parties would again become united.

***e* (54)** In this verse, as elsewhere in the Quran, *mercy* is mentioned first, thus showing that Divine mercy has precedence over Divine retribution.

knows those who are in the heavens and the earth. And certainly We made some of the prophets to excel others, and to David We gave the Zabūr.[a]

56 Say: Call on those whom you assert besides Him; they have no power to remove distress from you nor to change. **57**Those whom they call upon, themselves seek the means of access to their Lord — whoever of them is nearest — and they hope for His mercy and fear His punishment. Surely the punishment of *y*our Lord is a thing to be cautious of.[b] **58**And there is not a town but We will destroy it before the day of Resurrection or punish it with a severe punishment. That is written in the Book.[c] **59**And nothing hindered Us from sending signs, but the ancients rejected them.[d] And We gave to Thamūd the she-camel, a manifest sign, but they did her wrong, and We send signs only to warn.

60 And when We said to *y*ou: Surely *y*our Lord encompasses people. And We made the vision which We showed *y*ou[e] only a

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***a* (55)** By saying that some of the prophets are made to excel others, the excellence of the Holy Prophet over others is implied. David is specially mentioned, because, as stated in the Psalms (called here *Zabūr*), he prayed for the utter destruction of his enemies, whereas the two previous verses show that the Holy Prophet was enjoined to deal mercifully with his opponents.

***b* (57)** These divinities, it is argued, themselves hoped for Divine mercy and feared His retribution; the nearer a person to the Divine Being, the greater was his hope of mercy and his fear of punishment if he disobeyed.

***c* (58)** There is a prophetical reference here to great disasters which would ruin populous towns. The words "before the day of Resurrection" clearly show that the destruction of the towns does not refer to the end of things. Already we have seen the fulfilment of this prophecy in the destruction of populous towns in almost every country of the world on an unprecedented scale, but it is nothing compared with the havoc which the atomic bomb and other inventions of this modern age are likely to work, if the mad struggle for power is not ended. It should be noted that the prophecy of the ruination of populous towns is here mentioned as a part of the Divine scheme in the ultimate triumph of Islam with which this chapter deals, and hence the reference to the sending of signs in v. 59.

***d* (59)** After speaking of a great sign in the latter days, the destruction of towns on a large scale, this verse speaks of a general law that God has always been sending signs to establish truth, and that nothing ever hindered Him from sending signs, though such signs were rejected by the people to whom they were sent. It is further made clear that signs are sent to warn people of the evil consequences of doing evil.

***e* (60-1)** The reference here is to the *vision of Ascension* or *the Mi'rāj*

trial for people, as also the tree cursed in the Quran.[a] And We warn them, but it only adds to their great inordinacy.

Section 7: **The devil's opposition to the righteous**

61 And when We said to the angels: Be submissive to Adam, they submitted, but not Iblīs.[b] He said: Shall I submit to him whom You have created of dust? **62**He said: Do You see, this is he whom You have honoured above me! If You grant me respite to the day of Resurrection, I will certainly cause his progeny to perish except a few. **63**He said: Go away! Whoever of them follows *y*ou surely hell is your recompense, a full recompense. **64**And incite whoever of them *y*ou can with *y*our voice,[c] and collect against them *y*our horse(-men) and *y*our foot(-soldiers),[d] and share with them in wealth and children,[e] and promise them. And the devil promises

(Bukhari, 63:42, hadith 3888), which was really a prophecy of the ultimate triumph of Islam. In a Hadith report the words describing the condition in which the Holy Prophet was at the time of this Ascension are: *whilst I was in a state between that of one sleeping and one awake* (Bukhari, 59:6, hadith 3207). Thus it was not an Ascension of the body. Although he was not asleep, he was in a vision. He was actually carried to the Holy Presence, and he was shown great wonders, but it was in spirit that he was carried, and it was with the spiritual eye that he saw those wonders, not in body and with the physical eye, for things spiritual can only be seen with the spiritual eye. This vision had an important significance. He saw it at a time when his condition was one of utmost helplessness, and he was shown that a great future lay before him. His opponents, as usual, disbelieved in such visions, and laughed at him.

***a* (60-2)** As the Holy Prophet's vision signified his future triumph and gave an indication of the greatness to which Islam would rise, the statement made elsewhere that the tree of *zaqqūm* was the food of sinners (44:43-44) contained a prophecy of the discomfiture of the enemies of Islam, telling them that a deadly food was in store for them. The reason why the vision and the statement about the cursed tree are conjoined is that the triumph of Islam and the discomfiture of the enemy went hand in hand.

***b* (61)** See 2:34 and 7:12.

***c* (64-1)** The devil is here compared with a coward who comes with great show but little real force, and who, if shown the least resistance, retreats at every step. Every inviter who invites people to the disobedience of Allah is such a devil.

***d* (64-2)** The forces of the devil are no other than the evildoers, those going quickly into evil being likened to horsemen and those who walk slowly in their evil course being likened to infantry.

***e* (64-3)** The sharing of the devil in wealth signifies *everything spent or acquired unlawfully* and sharing in children is in reference to *committing fornication.*

them only to deceive. **65**My servants — *y*ou have surely no authority over them.[a] And *y*our Lord is sufficient as having charge of affairs.

66 Your Lord is He Who speeds the ships for you in the sea that you may seek of His grace. Surely He is ever Merciful to you. **67**And when distress afflicts you in the sea, away go those whom you call on except He; but when He brings you safe to the land, you turn away. And man is ever ungrateful.[b] **68**Do you then feel secure that He will not bring you low on a tract of land, or send on you a violent wind? [c] Then you will not find a protector for yourselves; **69**or, do you feel secure that He will not take you back into it another time, then send on you a fierce gale and thus overwhelm you for your ungratefulness? Then you will not find any aider against Us in the matter. **70**And surely We have honoured the children of Adam, and We carry them in the land and the sea, and We provide them with good things, and We have made them to excel highly most of those whom We have created.

Section 8: **Opposition to the Prophet**

71 On the day when We shall call every people with their leader:[d] then whoever is given his book in his right hand, these will read their book; and they will not be dealt with unjustly in the least.[e]

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a **(65)** *My servants* may include all human beings. The devil will say to the sinners: I had no authority over you (14:22).

b **(67)** A true picture is drawn here of human nature, which turns to Allah in affliction but forgets Him in ease.

c **(68)** It was by a violent wind that the combined forces of all the enemies of Islam were brought low in the Battle of the Allies, when, besieging Madinah in the year 5 A.H., they had to flee in disorder.

d **(71-1)** The meaning is that the righteous will follow the righteous leaders and the wicked will follow their wicked leaders. The word *imām,* or *leader,* here is interpreted in several other ways, meaning *scripture, prophet, law, book of deeds.* The last of these significances also suits the context, as the books of deeds are spoken of in the words that follow.

e **(71-2)** This book is the one mentioned in v. 14, i.e., the effect of one's deeds, which will be brought before everyone in a palpable form on the day of Resurrection. The book of deeds is given in the right hand to those who hold the Book of God in their right hands here, i.e., act upon it. As against them are those spoken of in the next verse; they remain blind to the Book of God, so they will be blind in the Hereafter.

72And whoever is blind in this (world) he will be blind in the Hereafter, and further away from the path.[a]

73 And surely they had purposed to turn *y*ou away from what We have revealed to *y*ou,[b] that *y*ou should forge against Us (some revelation) other than that, and then they would have taken *y*ou for a friend. **74**And if We had not made *y*ou firm, *y*ou might have indeed inclined to them a little; **75**then We would have made *y*ou taste a double (punishment) in life and a double (punishment) after death, and then *y*ou would not have found any helper against Us. **76**And surely they purposed to unsettle *y*ou from the land that they might expel *y*ou from it, and then they will not remain after *y*ou but a little while.[c] **77**(This is Our) way with Our messengers whom We sent before *y*ou, and *y*ou will not find a change in Our course.[d]

Section 9: **Truth will prevail**

78 Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night, and the recital of the Quran at dawn. Surely the recital of the Quran at dawn is witnessed.[e] **79**And during a part

***a* (72)** Those who remain blind to truth in this life remain blind in the life after death, which shows that it is here that a hellish life begins with spiritual blindness, and that the hell of the next life is also a blindness. This is corroborated by what is said in 57:12, that the faithful will have a light on that day.

***b* (73)** This refers to an incident at Makkah when the chief men of the Quraish offered to give the Prophet wealth or to make him their king, if he gave up speaking against their idols and their evil ways. The Prophet's reply was that he wanted neither of these things, but that it was for their welfare that he asked them to give up evil ways.

***c* (76)** When the opponents failed to make the Prophet swerve from the path of Truth, they planned to expel him from the land, though they were told beforehand that in that case they themselves would not retain power but for a short time. It was only eight years after the *Hijrah* that the Prophet entered Makkah as a conqueror.

***d* (77)** This law is also stated in 14:13–14.

***e* (78)** After describing how the opponents wanted to bring the Prophet's mission to failure by various means, the Prophet is told to resort to prayer as a solution of the great difficulties he faced. From the declining of the sun to sunset are *Ẓuhr* and *'Aṣr,* or the early and late afternoon prayers, while from sunset till darkness are *Maghrib* and *'Iṣhā',* or the sunset prayer and the prayer at nightfall. The fifth is the morning prayer, which is called here *Qur'ān al-fajr,* or *the recital of the Quran at dawn*. Thus this verse, which is one of the very early revelations, mentions all the five prayers.

of the night, keep awake by it,[a] beyond what is incumbent on *y*ou; maybe *y*our Lord will raise *y*ou to a position of great glory.[b] **80**And say: My Lord, make me enter a truthful entering, and make me go forth a truthful exit, and grant me from Your presence an authority to help (me).[c] **81**And say: The Truth has come and falsehood vanished. Surely falsehood is ever bound to vanish.[d]

82 And the Quran that We reveal is a healing and a mercy to the believers, and it only increases the wrongdoers in loss.[e] **83**And when We bestow favours on man, he turns away and behaves proudly; and when evil afflicts him, he is in despair. **84**Say: Every-

***a* (79-1)** This refers to the *Tahajjud* prayer, whose name is derived from the words "keep awake" (*fa-tahajjad*). The time for this prayer is the latter portion of the night in the early hours. It is not an obligatory prayer but, as stated here, it is the means of raising a man to *a position of great glory*. The time at which it is said is most suited for the concentration of mind and for communion with God.

***b* (79-2)** The man whom the opponents had planned to expel from their city as a helpless man was to be raised to a position of eminent dignity through prayer to God, the *Tahajjud* prayer in the night in particular. As time passes on, the Prophet is ever rising to positions of greater and greater glory. But while the verse speaks in particular of the Prophet and of the great glory to which he was destined to rise, it gives a promise in general as well that whoever is sincere in calling upon God, especially at night, is raised to a position of glory.

***c* (80)** The reference here is a prophecy of the Prophet's Flight, *entering* Madinah and *going forth* from Makkah. But the words are also general, man being taught here to pray that his entering into any affair and his exit may be marked by truthfulness, and that he may be granted Divine help in all his undertakings.

***d* (81)** The advent of the Prophet is here spoken of as the advent of the *Truth,* in reference to the prophecy in John 16:13: "However, when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak; and he will tell you things to come." The vanishing of falsehood is here spoken of in the past tense to indicate the certainty of its occurrence. Falsehood finally disappeared from Makkah when the Prophet entered it as a conqueror, and as the House of the Holy One was cleared of the idols, the Prophet recited this verse, *The Truth has come and falsehood vanished* (Bukhari, 46:32, hadith 2478), thus showing that he understood it to contain the prophecy of the conquest of Makkah. The statement made here, however, is general and it means that falsehood cannot stand before Truth and that Truth must finally prevail in the whole world.

***e* (82)** The Quran is here called a healing and a mercy for spiritual diseases, and history bears testimony that spiritual diseases were all swept away by the Quran. But, it is added, it is a healing for the believers who follow it, and not for those who reject it, and its rejection brings only greater loss.

one acts according to his manner. But your Lord best knows who is best guided on the path.[a]

Section 10: **The Quran — a unique Guidance**

85 And they ask *y*ou about the revelation.[b] Say: The revelation is by the commandment of my Lord, and you are not given knowledge but a little. **86**And if We please, We could certainly take away what We have revealed to *y*ou, then *y*ou would find none to plead (*y*our cause) against Us — **87**But it is a mercy from *y*our Lord. Surely His bounty to *y*ou is abundant.

88 Say: If people and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it, though they helped one another.[c] **89**And certainly We have made clear for people in this Quran every kind of description,[d] but most people consent only to denying. **90**And they say: We will by no means believe in *y*ou, till *y*ou cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us,[e] **91**or *y*ou have a garden of palms and grapes in the midst of which *y*ou cause rivers to flow forth abundantly, **92**or *y*ou cause the heaven to come down upon us in pieces, as *y*ou think, or bring Allah and the angels face to face (with us), **93**or *y*ou have a house of gold,

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a **(84)** Both the believer and the disbeliever act according to the rules of conduct which they have set before themselves. Who is on the right path is made clear by the consequences which appear later but which are always known to God.

b **(85)** The word *rūḥ* means *inspiration* or *revelation* as well as *spirit*. Here, before this verse as well as after it, the Quran is the only topic of discussion, and therefore the context shows clearly that the question of the disbelievers is not about the soul of man, but about the Quran itself.

c **(88)** See 2:23 and 11:13 footnote. Out of the four places in which the disbelievers are challenged to produce the like of the Quran, this is the only one where the *jinn* and the *people* are spoken of together; in 2:23 the *shuhadā',* meaning helpers, leaders or their great men, take the place of the *jinn,* while 10:38 and 11:13 refer to calling upon "whom you can besides Allah." This shows that the word *jinn* is used in the Quran for the leaders of evil.

d **(89)** It is here affirmed that all that contributes to the moral and spiritual welfare of man is made distinct in the Quran.

e **(90)** The signs demanded in this and the following three verses relate to the promises made for the righteous and the threats of punishment for the wicked, and they were no doubt fulfilled in due time. But the disbelievers wanted to see the spiritual blessings of communion with God in a physical shape. The believers were granted gardens with rivers running in them even in this life, and punishment from heaven overtook the opponents, but this was to come about gradually.

or *y*ou ascend into heaven. And we will not believe in *y*our ascending till *y*ou bring down to us a book we can read. Say: Glory be to my Lord! Am I anything but a mortal messenger?[a]

Section 11: **Justice of retribution**

94 And nothing prevents people from believing, when the guidance comes to them, except that they say: Has Allah raised up a mortal to be a messenger? **95**Say: If there had been in the earth angels walking about secure, We would have sent down to them from the heaven an angel as messenger. **96**Say: Allah is sufficient for a witness between me and you. Surely He is ever Aware of His servants, Seer (of them).

97 And he whom Allah guides, he is on the right way; and he whom He leaves in error, for them *y*ou will find no guardians besides Him. And We shall gather them together on the day of Resurrection on their faces, blind and dumb and deaf. Their abode is hell. Whenever it abates, We make them burn the more. **98**This is their retribution because they disbelieve in Our messages and say: When we are bones and decayed particles, shall we then be raised up into a new creation? **99**Do they not see that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, is Able to create the like of them? And He has appointed for them a term, of which there is no doubt. But the wrongdoers consent only to denying. **100**Say: If you control the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, then you would withhold (them) for fear of spending. And man is ever miserly.

Section 12: **Comparison with Moses**

101 And certainly We gave Moses nine clear signs; so ask the Children of Israel. When he came to them, Pharaoh said to him: Surely I think *y*ou, Moses, to be one bewitched. **102**He said: Truly *y*ou know that none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth has sent these as clear proofs; and surely I believe *y*ou, Pharaoh, to be lost. **103**So he desired to scare them from the land, but We drowned him and those with him, all together; **104**and We said to the Children

a **(93)** The answer to all the demands of the disbelievers is that the Prophet was only a mortal messenger, and the prophecies regarding his own great future or the discomfiture of his enemies would be brought to fulfilment gradually, as in the case of messengers before him.

of Israel after him: Abide in the land. But when the latter promise came, We brought you all rolled up.[a]

105 And with truth have We revealed it, and with truth did it come. And We have not sent *y*ou but as a giver of good news and as a warner. **106**And it is a Quran We have made distinct, so that *y*ou may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have revealed it in portions.

107 Say: Believe in it or do not believe. Surely those who are given the knowledge before it, fall down prostrate on their faces when it is recited to them, **108**and they say: Glory be to our Lord! Surely the promise of our Lord was to be fulfilled.[b] **109**And they fall down on their faces, weeping, and it adds to their humility. **110**Say: Call on Allah or call on the Beneficent.[c] By whatever (name) you call on Him, He has the best names. And do not be loud in *y*our prayer nor be silent in it, and seek a way between these.[d] **111**And say: Praise be to Allah! — Who has not taken to Himself a son, and Who does not have a partner in the kingdom, and Who does not have a helper because of weakness; and proclaim His greatness, magnifying (Him).

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a **(104)** The latter promise here relates to the promise given to Moses for the raising up of another prophet like him. This is corroborated by what is said in the next verse about the revelation of the Quran, which came with truth, i.e., in fulfilment of a true promise. By the rolling up of the Israelites is meant that they would make way for another people, who would inherit the kingdom of God.

b **(108)** The *promise* spoken of here is no doubt the promise given to the former prophets regarding the advent of the Holy Prophet; and by *knowledge* in the previous verse is also meant *knowledge of the prophecies*.

c **(110-1)** The name *Raḥmān* (Beneficent) seems to have been particularly objectionable to the Arabs, who objected to its use even so late as the truce at Hudaibiyah. The Christians also do not recognize Allah to be *Raḥmān,* because it means that Allah shows mercy to His creatures without their having done anything to deserve it, while the Christian doctrine of atonement is based on the belief that Allah cannot show mercy to His creatures without receiving some satisfaction.

d **(110-2)** The two extremes with regard to prayer are its utterance in a very loud voice or not uttering any word at all with the tongue, thinking that God knows what is in the hearts. Muslims are told to take the middle course between the two extremes. Utterance of words makes the prayer go deeper down into the heart of man, and thus makes it more effective.

Chapter 18

Al-Kahf The Cave

This chapter deals with both the early state of Christianity, when it was under persecution and practised renunciation of the world, and prophetically with its latter-day condition when Christian nations have acquired unsurpassed material dominance in the world. It is called *The Cave* because early Christians sought refuge in such places from persecution and practised monkery in solitude. In the first as well as the last section the doctrine of the Divine sonship of Jesus is denounced (v. 4, v. 102) and the purely material engrossment of these nations is prophesied to lead to material and spiritual failure (v. 7–8, v. 103–104). In between, the chapter treats the following subjects: a story from early Christianity of the dwellers of the Cave, containing prophetical allusions to its later history, rejection of the truth by those who possess wealth and power, the guilty being brought to judgment, a story of Moses' search for knowledge and finding a man of God superior to him in knowledge, indicating the coming of Islam, and a story of King Darius I and his efforts to repel the two tribes of Gog and Magog, which again contains a prophetical allusion to the rise and dominance of modern Western nations. This chapter was revealed in the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **A warning to the Christians**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Praise be to Allah! — Who revealed the Book to His servant, and did not allow in it any crookedness, **2** rightly directing,[a] to give warning of severe punishment from Him and to give good news to the believers who do good that theirs is a goodly reward, **3**staying in it forever; **4**and to warn those who say: Allah has taken to Himself a son. **5**They have no knowledge of it, nor had their fathers. Grievous is the word that comes out of their mouths. They speak nothing but a lie.[b] **6**Then perhaps *y*ou will kill *y*ourself with grief,

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a **(2)** The Quran is here described as possessing two qualifications. The first refers to its own perfection, *there is no crookedness in it;* and the second speaks of it as a book suited to make others perfect, for it is called *qayyim*, as meaning one that rightly directs others.

b **(5)** The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: He who remembers the first ten verses of the chapter entitled *The Cave* is protected from the tribulation of *Dajjāl* (the Antichrist) (Sahih Muslim, 6:44). In another report the last ten verses

sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement.[a]

7 Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try which of them is best in works. **8**And We shall surely make what is on it dust, without vegetation.[b] **9**Or, do *y*ou think that the companions of the Cave and the Inscription were from among Our wonderful signs?[c] **10**When the youths

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of *The Cave* instead of the first ten are mentioned (Abu Dawud, 39:14, hadith 4323). Now in the first and the last sections of this chapter the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus is condemned. In the first section a warning is given to those who say *Allah has taken to Himself a son* (v. 4), in the last two to those who *take My servants to be friends besides Me* (v. 102), and this doctrine, the doctrine of sonship and of the divinity of a servant of God, is the basic doctrine of the Christian religion. Moreover, in the concluding ten verses, a true description of the occupation of Christian nations is given in the words *whose effort goes astray in this world's life* (v. 104). The Holy Prophet's saying quoted above plainly shows that the *Dajjāl* of the Hadith is the same as the upholders of the erroneous Christian doctrine of the sonship and divinity of Jesus Christ. Christianity, in its present form, being opposed to the true teachings of Christ, is thus the only Antichrist known to the Quran.

a **(6)** The anxiety which the Holy Prophet felt on account of a fallen humanity was so great that he is spoken of here as *almost killing himself with grief*. His was a life of absolute devotion to the cause of humanity, his only concern being that man should rise to the true dignity for which God had made him. This anxiety was not only for those who were directly addressed by him, but, as the context shows, it was as deep for another people, who attributed a son to the Divine Being, and whom outward finery was to mislead to such an extent as to make them strangers to spiritual truth. Reading the next verse leaves no doubt that the Prophet was shown the earthly embellishments which are so great a trial for Christendom today. The word *announcement* here refers to the Quran.

b **(8)** The picture drawn here is of the beautiful cities of the modern age, with all their attractions and luxuries, which so engross people that they neither pay attention to the preaching of truth nor to the pursuit of righteousness. The earth will be first beautified to its utmost, we are told here, and then laid waste, by man's own hands, lofty buildings being reduced to dust and beautiful gardens being turned into bare earth without any vegetation on it. All prophecies made known through the righteous servants of God, the prophets of the Old Testament and Jesus Christ, and then through the Quran and the Hadith, point to worldwide conflicts in the latter days, of nation rising against nation, and of destruction of cities on a vast scale. Science first embellished the earth and science is now turning it into a waste, by its atom bombs and other diabolic inventions.

c **(9)** *The Cave* stands for the Christian institution of monkery, this being the distinctive characteristic which it assumed soon after its birth. *Raqīm* means *an inscription* or *a tablet with a writing upon it*. The *Inscription* contains a prophetical reference to an aspect of the Christian religion quite opposed to its

sought refuge in the Cave, they said: Our Lord, grant us mercy from Yourself, and provide for us a right course in our affair. **11**So We prevented them from hearing in the Cave for a number of years,[a] **12**then We raised them up that We might know which of the two parties was best able to calculate the time for which they remained.[b]

Section 2: **The Dwellers in the Cave**

13 We relate to *y*ou their story with truth. Surely they were youths who believed in their Lord and We increased them in guidance. **14**And We strengthened their hearts when they stood up and said: Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; we call

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first aspect of growth in the *Cave.* Inscription (or *Advertisement*) is, in fact, as prominent a feature of the business activities of the Christian nations of today as the *Cave* was a feature of their religious activities in the early days. The Quran seems to have chosen the epithets to designate the Christian nations by indicating their most prominent characteristics in their early and their latter days.

The account from here to v. 22 is generally identified with the memorable story of the "seven sleepers", Christian youths who took refuge in a cave to escape the persecution of the Roman Emperor Decius around the year 250 C.E. According to the story, the Emperor ordered the entrance to the cave to be blocked with stones. It is stated that the youths fell asleep as soon as they were shut up in the cave, and awoke 187 years after this in the reign of Theodosius (some state it was 375 years), when the stones were removed to supply building material for some edifice. They then sent one of their number to bring food for them from the city, but he was taken to the judge on presenting a coin of the reign of Decius, and thus the youths were discovered. The story as narrated in the Quran does not credit the unnatural incidents of the above account. It only speaks of some men having taken refuge in a dark cave on account of a religious persecution; where and when it does not state. After they had rested for a part of a day, they made arrangements to get their food from outside (v. 19), and remained in this condition for "a number of years" (v. 11), but were subsequently discovered, and an edifice being built at the mouth of the cave caused their death (v. 21). It mentions conjectures as to their number and the number of years they remained in the cave (v. 22), but does not go beyond saying that there were *some* men who remained in the cave for *some* years.

However, the story itself is not without a deeper meaning, and more statements than one show that there is a reference to the history of Christianity itself in the story.

a **(11)** The meaning is that these people remained cut off from the rest of the world for a number of years. The Quran does not support the story that they remained in the cave for hundreds of years or that they were asleep all this time.

b **(12)** The *raising them up* might signify *raising them up from sleep*, as also *raising them up into a condition of activity*, after their remaining cut off from the world, as stated in the previous verse.

upon no god beside Him, for then indeed we should utter an enormity.[a]

15 These our people have taken gods beside Him. Why do they not bring clear authority for them? Who is then more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah? **16**And when you withdraw from them and what they worship except Allah, take refuge in the Cave; your Lord will spread forth for you some of His mercy, and provide for you a profitable course in your affair.

17 And *y*ou might see the sun, when it rose, decline from their Cave to the right, and when it set leave them behind on the left, while they were in a wide space of it.[b] This is from among the signs of Allah. He whom Allah guides, he is on the right way; and whom He leaves in error, *y*ou will not find for him a friend guiding aright.

Section 3: **The Dwellers in the Cave**

18 And *y*ou might think them awake while they were asleep, and We turned them about to the right and to the left, with their dog outstretching its paws at the entrance. If *y*ou looked at them, *y*ou would turn back from them in flight, and *y*ou would be filled with awe because of them.[c]

19 And thus did We rouse them that they might question

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a **(14)** This is to show that the early followers of Christianity were Unitarians — believers in one God only.

b **(17)** This describes the position of the cave, which was so situated that it did not admit sunshine. This could easily happen in a cave with its mouth to the north, situated in the northern hemisphere and above the Tropic of Cancer. With reference to the history of Christianity it may indicate its coming to Europe.

c **(18)** What is related in this section is clearly applicable to the story of the seven sleepers, as also to the later history of Christianity. In the first case, the meaning is that the youths, who fled for fear of persecution and betook themselves to a cave, slept for some time with a dog at the door of the cave. The whole scene was rather awe-inspiring: a dark cave, in some distant and uninhabited part of the country, with some men sleeping in it and a dog at the door. Applied to the history of Christianity the statement is equally true. In this case it should be borne in mind that *ruqūd* ("asleep") also means *inactive* or *stagnant*. Similarly *aiqāẓ* ("awake") means *vigilant* or *wary*. The *turning about to the right and to the left*, which signifies an uneasy condition while sleeping, may be used as expressing the activities of a man or a nation. Thus there may be a reference here to the lethargy in which the Christian nations remained for a long time, and to their subsequent going about in the world *in all directions*. It may also be noted that Europeans are generally fond of dogs.

each other. A speaker from among them said: How long have you stayed? They said: We have stayed for a day or a part of a day. (Others) said: Your Lord knows best how long you have stayed.[a] Now send one of you with this silver (coin) of yours to the city, then let him see what food is purest, and bring you provision from it, and let him behave with gentleness, and not make your case known to anyone.[b] **20**For if they prevail against you, they would stone you to death or force you back to their religion, and then you would never succeed.

21 And thus did We make (people) to get knowledge of them,[c] that they might know that Allah's promise is true and that the Hour — there is no doubt about it.[d] When they disputed among themselves about their affair and said: Erect an edifice over them.[e] Their Lord knows best about them. Those who prevailed in their affair said: We shall certainly build a place of worship over them.[f]

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a **(19-1)** This may refer either to the time for which the youths slept or to the centuries of inactivity of the Christian nations. A day of a thousand years is spoken of in the Quran (see 22:47, etc.), and therefore the word *day*, applied to the history of a nation, may signify a thousand years.

b **(19-2)** After having been refreshed with sleep, which might have been brought on by the fatigue of the journey, they thought of procuring food for themselves in that solitary cave and sent one of them to the city, and impressed on him that he should be gentle and should not give an inkling of their whereabouts to anyone. In reference to the history of Christianity, this speaks of the commercial activities of the Christian nations (i.e., in Asia and Africa, by means of which their rule was established. The words "and not make your case known to anyone" apply to their hidden intentions of gaining rule under the pretext of trade. — *Editor*)

c **(21-1)** It was their going out to purchase food that brought them to the knowledge of the outside world. It is not stated how long they continued in this state. Comparing this with v. 11, however, we may say that they passed several years in this condition.

d **(21-2)** The result of their becoming known is described in words which show that they were put to death, because the promise of Allah as to a future state of life is fully realized only after death.

e **(21-3)** These words show that their death was brought about by closing the mouth of the cave. This is what is meant by the erection of an edifice over them. The words may also signify the erection of a monument.

f **(21-4)** The people spoken of here are those *who prevailed in their affair*. This is a later incident, when Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire, and the reference here seems to be to the saint-worship which was prevalent in Christianity.

22(Some) say: (They were) three, the fourth of them their dog; and (others) say: Five, the sixth of them their dog, making conjectures about the unseen. And (others) say: Seven, and the eighth of them their dog. Say: My Lord best knows their number — none knows them but a few. So do not contend in their matter but with a clear argument, and do not question any of them concerning them.[a]

Section 4: **The Quran as a Guidance**

23 And do not say of anything: I will do that tomorrow, **24**unless Allah please.[b] And remember *y*our Lord when *y*ou forget and say: Maybe my Lord will guide me to a nearer course to the right than this.[c]

25 And they remained in their cave three hundred years, and they add nine.[d] **26**Say: Allah knows best how long they remained.

***a* (22)** This verse and v. 25 show that these are only conjectures of the people with regard to them. Their number and the number of years during which they remained in the cave are both matters which are said to be only known to Allah. Ibn Abbas is, however, of the opinion that the words condemning the first two as conjectures show that the last-mentioned number, i.e., seven, is correct. (*Editor's Note:* In his Urdu commentary, Maulana Muhammad Ali has applied this number to the number of Western powers, whose number varies depending on whether they are counted individually or in groups according to their treaty alliances.)

According to Ibn Jarir's commentary, the people referred to in the concluding words, *any of them,* are the People of the Book, or the Christians. It is clear from this that it is really the history of Christianity that is dealt with in the story of the Companions of the Cave. Verse 25, which again speaks of the same people who are spoken of here, makes it clear that it is the history of Christianity that is really aimed at.

***b* (24-1)** Though the words are general, there seems to be a special prophetic reference to the Prophet's Flight and his taking refuge in a cave. He had entirely to trust in Allah, Who was to bring it about as He thought best for him.

***c* (24-2)** The meaning is that the difficulties which had to be experienced by the dwellers in the cave would be removed from the Prophet's way. He had to pass only three days in the cave, and though a powerful enemy exerted itself to its utmost, his hiding-place at only a distance of three miles from the city, whither food was conveyed to him, could not be discovered. Or, in *the nearer course* there is a reference to the unprecedented triumph of Islam, which spread over the whole of Arabia within twenty-three years, and spread from Spain in the west to China in the east within a century, whereas Christianity remained in a state of subjection in its birth-place for three hundred years, as stated in the verse that follows.

***d* (25)** The history of Christianity, which runs like an undercurrent in the story of the Companions of the Cave, finds a clear expression now. There is no

His is the unseen of the heavens and the earth. How clear His sight and His hearing! There is no guardian for them beside Him, and He takes none as partner in His judgment.

27 And recite what has been revealed to *y*ou of the Book of *y*our Lord. There is none who can alter His words.[a] And *y*ou will find no refuge beside Him. **28** And keep *y*ourself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring His goodwill, and let not *y*our eyes pass from them, desiring the beauties of this world's life. And do not follow him whose heart We have made unmindful of Our remembrance, and he follows his low desires and his case exceeds due bounds. **29** And say: The Truth is from your Lord; so whoever wishes, let him believe, and whoever wishes, let him disbelieve. Surely We have prepared for the wrongdoers a Fire, an enclosure of which will encompass them. And if they cry for water, they are given water like molten brass, scalding their faces.[b] Evil the drink! And ill the resting-place! **30** As for those who believe and do good, We do not waste the reward of him who does a good work. **31** These it is for whom are Gardens of perpetuity in which rivers flow; they are adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they wear green robes of fine silk and thick brocade, reclining therein on raised couches.[c] Excellent the recompense! And goodly the resting-place!

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tradition that the Companions of the Cave remained in the Cave for three hundred years, but Christianity itself remained in a Cave for full three hundred years. It is a fact that Christianity rose to power with the conversion of Constantine, and at the same time it lost its purity with the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, which was promulgated in 325 C.E. It is, moreover, now almost agreed that Jesus Christ was born in 6–5 B.C. So if he began his ministry at the age of thirty, the Christian religion may be said to have been born at about 25 C.E., and thus exactly after three hundred years it lost its purity by the promulgation of the Trinitarian doctrine, emerging at the same time as a State religion. Thus it remained in the Cave for three hundred years. As to adding nine years, to convert solar years to lunar years three years have to be added to every hundred years, and to the three centuries another nine years are thus added.

a **(27)** By "words" are meant here *prophecies*, because it is the prophecy of the Prophet's Flight and his final triumph over his enemies that is referred to here. These prophecies, it is claimed, cannot be altered by people, and they must come to pass, however great the opposing forces.

b **(29)** They refused the water of spiritual life in this life, and so they will have no water to quench their thirst in the life after death.

c **(31)** It is after these things that people hanker in this life, but the ornaments and robes of this life are transitory. The righteous, who in this life desire and

Section 5: **A parable**

32 And set forth to them the parable of two men — for one of them We made two gardens of grape-vines, and We surrounded them with date-palms, and between them We made corn-fields.[a] **33**Both these gardens yielded their fruits, and did not fail in this at all, and We caused a river to gush forth in their midst, **34**and he had fruit. So he said to his companion, while arguing with him: I have more wealth than *y*ou, and am greater in followers. **35**And he went into his garden, while he was unjust to himself. He said: I do not think that this will ever perish, **36**and I do not think the Hour will come;[b] and even if I am returned to my Lord, I will certainly find a better place of return than this.

37 His companion said to him, while arguing with him: Do *y*ou disbelieve in Him Who created *y*ou of dust, then of a small life-germ, then He made *y*ou a perfect man? **38**But as for me, He, Allah, is my Lord, and I set up none as partner with my Lord. **39**And why did *y*ou not say, when *y*ou entered *y*our garden: It is as Allah has pleased — there is no power except in Allah? If *y*ou consider me as less than *y*ou in wealth and children — **40**then maybe my Lord will give me better than *y*our garden, and will send on (*y*ours) a reckoning from heaven so that it is dust without plant, **41**or its water will sink down into the ground, so that *y*ou are unable to find it. **42**And his fruit was destroyed; so he began to wring his hands for

struggle for only spiritual ornaments and moral beauty, find these visible in the after-life. However, these prophecies were in one sense brought to fulfilment in this very life also. The Arabs, whose only wealth consisted of their camels and horses, and whose clothes were made of skins or cloth of rough textures, found the treasures of Rome and Persia laid at their feet, and the bracelets of gold and the silk brocade interwoven with gold, which they had never seen before, were now brought to them in abundance, while the gardens of Mesopotamia and Persia were given to them for a permanent heritage.

a **(32)** The parable set forth here is undoubtedly to illustrate the condition of the Christian and the Muslim nations. The former received an abundance of the wealth of this life, as is indicated by the gardens of the parable, while the latter, though poorer in worldly possessions, were richer in the heavenly blessings of Allah. The former reject the message of Truth, of which the latter are the bearers, and their vaunt is the same as that of the wealthy man in the parable: *I have more wealth than you, and am greater in followers* (v. 34).

b **(36)** By the "Hour" is meant the hour of doom which must overtake every people who reject the Truth.

what he had spent on it, as it lay waste, its roofs fallen down,[a] and he said: Ah me! I wish I had not set up any partner with my Lord! **43**And he had no forces to help him against Allah, nor could he defend himself. **44**Thus protection is only Allah's, the True One. He is best to (give) reward and best for (determining) the final end.

Section 6: **The guilty are brought to judgment**

45 And set forth to them the likeness of the life of this world as water which We send down from the cloud, so the vegetation of the earth becomes luxuriant by it, then it becomes dry, broken into pieces which the winds scatter. And Allah is the Holder of power over all things. **46**Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world; but the ever-abiding, the good works, are better with *y*our Lord in reward and better in hope. **47**And the day when We cause the mountains to pass away, and *y*ou see the earth a levelled plain and We gather them together and leave none of them behind.[b] **48**And they are brought before *y*our Lord in ranks. Now certainly you have come to Us as We created you at first. But you thought that We had not made an appointment for you. **49**And the book is placed, and *y*ou see the guilty fearing for what is in it, and they say: O woe to us! What a book is this! It leaves out neither a small thing nor a great one, but numbers them (all), and they find what they did confronting them. And *y*our Lord does not wrong anyone.[c]

Section 7: **Their helplessness**

50 And when We said to the angels: Be submissive to Adam, they submitted, but not Iblīs. He was from among the jinn, so he transgressed the commandment of his Lord.[d] Will you then take him and his offspring for friends rather than Me, and they are

a **(42)** Here we have an exact description of the havoc that is being wrought in the world before our eyes by modern wars.

b **(47)** Making the earth a levelled plain indicates the removal of all those mighty obstacles which stood in the way of the advancement of Truth, and these are the mountains which are made to pass away; see 20:105–107.

c **(49)** This comprehensive book is the same as is spoken of in 17:13–14. There is not the slightest action, good or bad, which does not leave its effect behind.

d **(50)** Iblīs is one of the *jinn* or the evil spirits, so it is an error to take him for an angel or a good spirit. The spirit of evil is always rebellious, and it is against this that man is warned, so that he should resist every evil tendency.

your enemies? Evil is the exchange for the unjust. **51**I did not make them witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation. Nor could I take those who mislead for aiders. **52**And one day He will say: Call on those whom you considered to be My partners. So they will call on them, but they will not answer them, and We shall cause a separation between them. **53**And the guilty will see the Fire, and know that they are about to fall into it, and they will find no escape from it.

Section 8: **Warning is disregarded**

54 And certainly We have made distinct in this Quran for mankind every kind of description; and man is in most things contentious. **55**And nothing prevents people from believing when the guidance comes to them, and from asking forgiveness of their Lord, but that (they wait) for the way of the ancients to catch up with them, or that the punishment should confront them. **56**And We do not send messengers but as givers of good news and warning, and those who disbelieve contend by means of falsehood to weaken thereby the Truth, and they take My messages and the warning for a mockery. **57**And who is more unjust than he who is reminded of the messages of his Lord, then he turns away from them and forgets what his hands have already done? Surely We have placed veils over their hearts, so they do not understand it, and a deafness in their ears.[a] And if *y*ou call them to the guidance, they will even then never follow the right course.

58 And *y*our Lord is Forgiving, full of mercy. If He were to punish them for what they earn, He would certainly hasten the punishment for them. But for them there is an appointed time from which they will find no refuge. **59**And these towns — We destroyed them when they did wrong. And We have appointed a time for their destruction.[b]

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a **(57)** It is when man becomes so iniquitous as to turn away from the truth and so callous as not to care for the evil that he does that a veil is placed over his heart.

b **(59)** The personal pronoun *their* refers to the opponents of Truth, earlier as well as later.

Section 9: **Moses travels in search of knowledge**

60 And when Moses said to his servant:[a] I will not cease until I reach the junction of the two rivers, or I will go on for years.[b] **61**So when they reached the junction of the two (rivers), they forgot their fish, and it took its way into the river, being free. **62**But when they had gone further, he said to his servant: Bring us our morning meal, we have certainly found this journey of ours tiring. **63**He (the servant) said: Did *y*ou see when we took refuge on the rock, I forgot the fish, and none but the devil made me forget to speak of it, and it took its way into the river; what a wonder![c] **64**He said: This is what we sought for. So they returned retracing their footsteps.

65 Then they found one of Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves.[d] **66**Moses said to him: May I follow *y*ou that *y*ou may teach me some of the good *y*ou have been taught? **67**He said: *Y*ou will not

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***a* (60-1)** Some reports give his name as Joshua, the son of Nun, the man who afterwards appears so prominently in the history of Israel.

The incidents narrated in verses 60–82 may be the actual experience of Moses or this journey may simply be an Ascension of Moses, like the Ascension (*Mi'rāj*) of the Holy Prophet, referred to in the last chapter. What is stated in the next section makes the latter view more probable.

***b* (60-2)** Moses lived in Egypt for forty years, and the junction of the two rivers (*Majma' al-Baḥrain*) is no other than the junction of the two great branches of the Nile at Khartoum. Rabbinical and Hellenistic literature agree that Moses went to Ethiopia. Hence a journey to Khartoum, which was near the southern boundary of Ethiopia, made in search of knowledge, is most probable. Some commentators, however, do not take these words literally, taking the meaning to be the union of the rivers of human and Divine knowledge. I would, however, suggest that if we accept this journey in the light of an Ascension, it would be an indication of the limitation of the Mosaic dispensation. Moses' going on for years until he reached the "the junction of the two rivers" would mean that the Mosaic dispensation would see its termination after a time, being replaced by one which was to be guided by a prophet who is the union of the two seas of human and Divine knowledge, or one in whom the temporal and the spiritual would find their highest manifestation, this being the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

***c* (63)** The loss of the fish was, according to a report, to serve as a sign that the goal had been attained (Bukhari, 3:44, hadith 122). There is nothing either in the Quran or in the Hadith to show that this was a roasted fish. Taking refuge on the rock shows that they were staying at a place which was flooded by the river, and Moses' companion, when hastening for refuge, forgot to take the fish along with him. The wonder is not expressed at the fish having gone down into the river, but because he had forgotten to mention the loss to Moses.

***d* (65)** His name was *Khaḍir* (Bukhari, 3:44, hadith 122).

be able to have patience with me. [68]And how can *y*ou have patience in matters in which *y*ou do not have a comprehensive knowledge? [69]He said: If Allah please, *y*ou will find me patient, nor shall I disobey *y*ou in anything. [70]He said: If *y*ou would follow me, do not question me about anything until I myself speak to *y*ou about it.

Section 10: **Moses travels in search of knowledge**

71 So they set out, until, when they embarked in a boat, he made a hole in it. (Moses) said: Have *y*ou made a hole in it to drown its occupants? *Y*ou have surely done a terrible thing. [72]He said: Did I not say that *y*ou will not be able to have patience with me? [73]He said: Do not blame me for what I forgot, and do not be hard upon me for what I did.

74 So they went on, until, when they met a boy, he killed him. (Moses) said: Have *y*ou killed an innocent person, not guilty of killing another? *Y*ou have indeed done a horrible thing. *[75]He said: Did I not say to *y*ou that *y*ou will not be able to have patience with me? [76]He said: If I ask *y*ou about anything after this, do not keep company with me. *Y*ou will then indeed have found an excuse in my case.

*Part 16

77 So they went on, until, when they came to the people of a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to entertain them as guests. Then they found in it a wall which was on the point of falling, so he put it into a right state. (Moses) said: If *y*ou had wished, *y*ou could have taken a recompense for it. [78]He said: This is the parting between me and *y*ou. Now I will inform *y*ou of the significance of that about which *y*ou could not have patience.

79 As for the boat, it belonged to poor people working on the river, and I intended to damage it, for there was behind them a king who seized every boat by force. [80]And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared that he might involve them in wrong-doing and disbelief.[a] [81]So we intended that their Lord might give them in his place one better in purity and nearer to mercy. [82]And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them, and their father had

***a* (80)** That the youth himself deserved death is abundantly clear. His inordinacy had now reached an extreme when it was feared that his innocent parents would be involved in the trouble which must befall him as a result of his wrong-doing. The circumstances were known to *Khaḍir*, though not to Moses.

been a righteous man. So *y*our Lord intended that they should attain their maturity and take out their treasure — a mercy from *y*our Lord — and I did not do it of my own accord. This is the significance of that about which *y*ou could not have patience.[a]

Section 11: **Dhu-l-qarnain and Gog and Magog**

83 And they ask *y*ou about Dhu-l-qarnain. Say: I will recite to you an account of him. **84**Truly We established him (with power) in the land and granted him means of access to everything; **85**so he followed a course.[b] **86**Until, when he reached the setting-place of

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a **(82)** The interpretation of the three incidents shows a manifestation of Divine wisdom in what takes place in the everyday life of man. Divine laws, as manifested in nature, are really working towards ultimate good, though sometimes they may appear to the outward eye to be working to the detriment of somebody. The beneficent hand of Allah that works in nature is always directing humanity to the goal of great good, though that goal must necessarily be reached with apparent loss. Sometimes the loss is only apparent, as in the case of making a hole in the boat; there was no real loss, but the apparent loss served a great purpose and brought much benefit to the owner. The second instance is that in which there is real loss to a person, but it is for the good of humanity at large, for life must be sacrificed for the ultimate good of humanity. The third instance shows that, for the good of humanity, deeds must be done which bring no immediate reward, and that good done by one generation is not devoid of benefit to the next.

Moses himself had, in fact, to undergo the experience of his teacher, and the incidents seem no more than prophetic allegories of Moses' own life-work. Moses had to lead his people to a place where they thought they had only been brought to be drowned; but their safe passage through the sea showed that it was for their good. Then he had to order his men to fight against an iniquitous people and to put them to death, but he was not shedding human blood to no purpose, for it was really a step towards the evolution of a better race. And finally, his devoting his own life to the Israelites, descendants of a righteous man, corresponded to his teacher's building the wall for the orphans without claiming recompense. Read in this light, the narration is clearly an Ascension of Moses, foreshadowing the great events which were to befall him.

b **(83)** *Dhu-l-qarnain* literally means *the two-horned one*, or *one belonging to two generations* or *two centuries*. The reference here seems to be to the two-horned ram of Daniel's vision (Daniel, 8:3), which he interpreted as the Kingdoms of Media and Persia, which were combined into a single kingdom under one ruler, Cyrus, who is erroneously called Darius in the Bible (*Encyclopedia Biblica* and *Jewish Encyclopedia,* Art. 'Darius'). The reference in Daniel's vision is, however, not to Cyrus but to Darius I Hystaspes (521-485 B.C.), "who allowed the Jews to rebuild their temple… His liberality towards the Jews is in complete

the sun,[a] he found it going down into a black sea,[b] and found by it a people. We said: O Dhu-l-qarnain, either punish them or do them a benefit. **87**He said: As for him who is unjust, we shall punish him, then he will be returned to his Lord, and He will punish him with an exemplary punishment. **88**And as for him who believes and does good, for him is a good reward, and We shall speak to him an easy word of Our command.[c]

89 Then he followed a course. **90**Until, when he reached (the land of) the rising sun, he found it rising on a people to whom We had given no shelter from it[d] — **91**so it was. And We had full knowledge of what he had.

92 Then he followed a course. **93**Until, when he reached (a place) between the two mountains, he found on that side of them

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accord with what we know otherwise of his general policy in religious matters towards the subject nations" (*Enc. Biblica,* 'Darius').

The reference in the Quran in the history of Dhu-l-qarnain is to Darius I: "Darius was the organizer of the Persian Empire. His conquests served to round off the boundaries of his realm in Armenia, the Caucasus, and India, and along the Turanian steppes and the highlands of Central Asia" (Jewish Enc., 'Darius I'). The following remarks in the Encyclopaedia Britannica strengthen this view: "Darius in his inscriptions appears as a fervent believer in the true religion of Zoroaster. But he was also a great statesman and organizer. The time of conquests had come to an end; the wars which Darius undertook, like those of Augustus, only served the purpose of gaining strong natural frontiers for the empire and keeping down the barbarous tribes on its borders. Thus Darius subjugated the wild nations of the Pontic and Armenian mountains, and extended the Persian dominion to the Caucasus; for the same reason he fought against the Sacae and other Turanian tribes". The references to Darius being a fervent believer in the true religion of Zoroaster, to his subduing the barbarous tribes on the borders, to his gaining strong natural frontiers for the empire, and to his fighting against the Sacae clearly point him out as the Dhu-l-qarnain of the Quran.

***a* (86-1)** This signifies the western-most point of his empire.

***b* (86-2)** The place referred to is no other than the Black Sea, as, Armenia being within the Kingdom of Persia, the Black Sea formed the northwestern boundary of the empire.

***c* (88)** Being a true follower of Zoroaster, the well-known Persian prophet, Darius seems to have invited these tribes to his religion.

***d* (90)** Darius goes first westward to the Black Sea (v. 85–86). Then he undertakes an eastward journey — the land of the rising sun. The description of the people found here, a people who had no shelter from the sun, is a description of the barbarous aboriginal tribes on the shores of the Caspian.

a people who could hardly understand a word.[a] **94**They said: Dhu-l-qarnain, Gog and Magog do mischief in the land. May we then pay *y*ou tribute on condition that *y*ou raise a barrier between us and them?[b] **95**He said: The power with which my Lord has established me is better, so if only you help me with strength (of men), I will make a fortified barrier between you and them: **96**Bring me blocks of iron.[c] At length, when he had filled up the space

***a* (93)** The three journeys alluded to seem to have been undertaken with the object of strengthening the frontiers of the empire, the most important of these being that spoken of here, the part of the frontier between the Caspian and the Black Seas, where the Caucasus afforded a natural protection against the attacks of the Scythians. The two mountains are the mountains of Armenia and Azarbaijan. The people settling there spoke a different language and could not understand the Iranian language.

***b* (94)** In the Bible, Ezekiel 38:2 contains the words: "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him". North of the Caucasus we find two rivers bearing the names of Tobol and Moskva, on the latter of which is situated the ancient city of Moscow, and on the former the more recent town of Tobolsk. It seems almost certain that these two rivers received their names from the two tribes of Ezekiel 38:2, the Tubal and Meshech, and then gave their names to the two above-mentioned cities. This view is in accordance with the opinion of ancient writers like Josephus, who settle the Magog north of the Caucasus. Thus the name Magog stands for tribes which occupied territories to the north and north-east of the Black Sea, tribes which gave their names directly or indirectly to the towns of Tobolsk and Moscow.

Another point worth considering is the presence of the gigantic effigies of Gog and Magog in Guildhall, London, which can be traced to a very early period in English history. This makes it probable that the Angles or the Saxons had in very ancient times some connection with the Scythians or other tribes living north of the Caucasus or the Black Sea. It may be deduced from this that the ancestors of the present Teutonic and Slav races, the main nations of eastern and western Europe respectively, are the Gog and Magog spoken of in the Quran, both these races originating from the same land.

The next statement, that the tribes found by Darius between Azerbaijan and the Armenian mountains were constantly harassed by their northern neighbours, the Scythians, is also borne out by history. "About 512 Darius undertook a war against the Scythians … The purpose of this war can only have been to attack the nomadic Turanian tribes in the rear, and thus to secure peace on the northern frontier of the empire" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Art. 'Darius').

The barrier referred to in this and the following verses is the famous wall at Derbent, on the western shore of the Caspian, which had iron gates and numerous watchtowers for defence. Its name, Alexander's Wall, is a misnomer due to the mistake made by Muslim historians in supposing Dhu-l-qarnain to be Alexander.

***c* (96)** The blocks of iron were needed for the iron gates in the wall.

between the two mountain sides, he said, Blow. Till, when he had made it (as) fire, he said: Bring me molten brass to pour over it.

97 So they were not able to scale it, nor could they make a hole in it. **98**He said: This is a mercy from my Lord, but when the promise of my Lord comes to pass He will crumble it, and the promise of my Lord is ever true.[a] **99**And on that day We shall let some of them surge against others and the trumpet will be blown, then We shall gather them all together,[b] **100**and We shall bring forth hell,

***a* (98)** From the historical narration of the past, the subject is now changed to the future. Gog and Magog are described as two nations, and after describing the history of these nations, whose depredations on peaceful nations were brought to an end by Darius, we are now told that Gog and Magog will again be let loose in the latter days. In fact, this is clearly foretold in another chapter of the same period: "when Gog and Magog are let loose and they sally forth from every elevated place" (21:96). The crumbling of the wall which withheld Gog and Magog for a time is thus explained by the Quran itself as the letting loose of Gog and Magog. Just as the building of the wall indicated the confinement of Gog and Magog to their own territorial bounds, the crumbling of the wall means that they will at some future time be let loose and will then dominate the whole world. This domination is spoken of in the Hadith in various ways. According to one hadith, "No one will have the power to fight against them" (Sahih Muslim, 54:20, hadith 2937a). According to another, "they will drink the water of the whole world" (*Kanaz al-'Ummāl,* vol. 7, p. 2157). As shown earlier, the ancestors of Gog and Magog are the Slav and Teutonic races, and in the world-domination of Gog and Magog is thus clearly hinted the domination of the European nations over the whole world, and the prophecy has thus found fulfilment in our days.

***b* (99)** A mighty conflict of nations is clearly spoken of here, and the words no doubt refer to some catastrophe like that which is predicted in the Gospels in the words: "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew, 24:7–8).

The Quran makes it clear that the reference in nation rising against nation is to the great European conflicts of modern times. Gog and Magog, or the European nations, having subdued the whole world, could not agree on the division of the spoils, and they are rushing at one another's throats, and the whole world being subject to them, their struggle has assumed the form of a world conflict. But if the first part of the verse speaks of the destruction due to these wars, the second part raises a great hope. A mighty Revolution will come about. That is what is meant by the *blowing of the trumpet*. The revolution would unite them; it would drive them to one common faith. Material benefits having turned man into the enemy of man, a spiritual awakening will, we are told, be brought about which will change the world entirely. Instead of cutting one another's throats people will learn to love one another, and they will all be but one nation. There is a broad

exposed to view, on that day before the disbelievers,[a] **101**whose eyes were under a cover from My Reminder, and they could not bear to hear.[b]

Section 12: **Christian nations**

102 Do those who disbelieve think that they can take My servants to be protectors besides Me?[c] Surely We have prepared hell as an entertainment for the disbelievers. **103**Say: Shall We inform you who are the greatest losers in respect of deeds? **104**Those whose effort is lost in this world's life, and they think that they are making good manufactures.[d] **105**Those are they who disbelieve in the messages of their Lord and meeting with Him, so their deeds are fruitless. Nor shall We set up a balance for them on the day of Resurrection.[e] **106**That is their reward — hell, because they disbelieved and held My messages and My messengers in mockery.

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enough hint here at the nation of Islam, for there is but one faith, the faith of Islam, which has been able to weld diverse people into one whole. The day of peace for this world will dawn with the dawning of the idea on the mind of man that there is only a single nation, the human nation, that lives on this earth: "Mankind is a single nation" (2:213).

***a* (100)** These words complete the picture of the great conflict spoken of in the previous verse. It describes the severity of the conflict, which will reduce the world to a veritable hell. There was hell raging on this earth in World War 2. What a World War 3 may bring, no one can say.

***b* (101)** The reason is given in these words why these disasters will be brought on man: These are people *whose eyes are under a cover from My Reminder*. In fact, they are so estranged from God that they cannot even *bear to hear* His Reminder. So thoroughly have lust and greed engrossed the civilized world!

***c* (102)** The Christians are meant here, because theirs is the most prominent example of having taken a servant of Allah, a prophet, for God. In fact, Jesus Christ is the only person whom the Quran recognizes as a righteous servant of God and who has been taken for God by a large part of the world.

***d* (104)** This is a clear description of the present attitude of the civilized nations to their moral and spiritual needs — their effort is entirely wasted in this world's life, and they cannot give a moment's consideration to the life after death. The portrait of the material civilization, to which Christianity has led, as drawn in this section, attains to its most vivid clearness in these words. Manufacture is the one speciality and pride of the West. But they are so engrossed in the contest of manufactures that they have no thought of God left in their minds.

***e* (105)** Their deeds are fruitless because what they do relates to the vanities of life. They have no vision for the higher values of life, for the ultimate end, which is here spoken of as the *meeting with the Lord*. Hence we are told that no balance will be set up for them on the day of Resurrection, because all their deeds relate to this life, and end where this life ends.

107 As for those who believe and do good deeds, for them are Gardens of Paradise, an entertainment, **108**to abide therein; they will not desire removal from there. **109**Say: If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would surely be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought as much again to add (to it).[a] **110**Say: I am only a mortal like you — it is revealed to me that your God is one God. So whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and make no one a partner (with God) in the service of his Lord.

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a **(109)** In these words there is a refutation of the Christian doctrine that "the word was with God", or that "the word was God" (John 1:1). The words of God are so numerous, we are here told, that the sea would be exhausted, if it were to serve as ink for writing them. In fact, everything created is a word of God according to the Quran, and things created know no end.

Chapter 19

Maryam Mary

The name of this chapter is taken from the story of *Mary,* mother of Jesus. It begins with an account of the birth of John and of Jesus, the last representatives of prophecy in the house of Israel, and then refutes the doctrine of the Divine sonship of Jesus. It then mentions the missions of some earlier prophets, showing that only human beings are raised to reform the world. At the end the doctrine that Jesus is the son of God is again denounced. This chapter was revealed in the early period at Makkah, about or before the fifth year of the Holy Prophet's mission.

Section 1: **Zacharias and John**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Sufficient, Guide, Blessed, Knowing, Truthful God.[a] **2**A mention of the mercy of *y*our Lord to His servant Zacharias — **3**when he called upon his Lord, crying in secret. **4**He said: My Lord, my bones are weakened, and my head flares with whiteness (of hair), and I have never been unsuccessful in my prayer to You, my Lord. **5**And I fear my kinsfolk after me, and my wife is barren, so grant me from Yourself an heir **6**who should inherit me and inherit from the Children of Jacob, and make him, my Lord, acceptable (to You).[b]

7 O Zacharias, We give *y*ou good news of a boy, whose name is John: We have not made before anyone his equal.[c] **8**He said:

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a **(1)** The original Arabic consists of the letters *kāf, hā, yā, 'ain* and *ṣād.* These stand for the words *Kāf-in* (Sufficient), *Hād-in* (Guide), *Yamīn* (Blessed), *'Alīm* (Knowing), and *Ṣādiq* (Truthful).

b **(6)** His fear was due to their not leading righteous lives, and he feared there would be none to lead people into the ways of righteousness after him. The inheritance of the Children of Jacob is the inheritance of the Divine blessing of prophethood, which had been promised to Jacob's children.

c **(7)** It is not, of course, meant that one like John or equal to him was never before created in the world. According to the Gospels: "among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew, 11:11).

My Lord, how shall I have a son, and my wife is barren, and I have reached extreme old age? **9**He said: So (it will be). *Y*our Lord says: It is easy to Me, and indeed I created *y*ou before, when *y*ou were nothing. **10**He said: My Lord, give me a sign. He said: *Y*our sign is that *y*ou do not speak to people three nights, being in sound health.[a] **11**So he went forth to his people from the sanctuary and proclaimed to them: Glorify (Allah) morning and evening.

12 O John, take hold of the Book with strength. And We granted him wisdom when a child, **13**and kind-heartedness from Us and purity. And he was dutiful, **14**and kindly to his parents, and he was not insolent, disobedient.[b] **15**And peace on him the day he was born and the day he died, and the day he is raised to life!

Section 2: **Mary and Jesus**

16 And mention Mary in the Book. When she drew aside from her family to an eastern place; **17**so she screened herself from them. Then We sent to her Our spirit and it appeared to her as a well-made man.[c] **18**She said: I seek refuge from *y*ou in the Beneficent, if *y*ou are one guarding against evil. **19**He said: I am only bearer of a message of *y*our Lord: That I will give *y*ou a pure boy.[d] **20**She said: How can I have a son and man has not yet touched me, nor have

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The meaning is that one like him was not born in Zacharias' family, because in the previous verse it is his own relatives about whom Zacharias says that he feared, and therefore an assurance was now given to him that the promised son would not be like the other members of his family regarding whom he feared. Or the meaning may be that one like him had not appeared in that age.

a **(10)** In 3:41 the words are *three days*, thus showing that three days and three nights are meant. The Quran does not support the idea that Zacharias was struck dumb, because it speaks of him as being *in sound health*. The object of assuming silence was to be engaged solely in prayer to the Divine Being, and hence Zacharias told his people also to glorify God.

b **(14)** The various aspects of the character of John deserve to be noted. He was pure and sinless and never disobeyed God. In fact, what is said of one prophet is equally true of all. They are all pure from birth, and never disobey God.

c **(17)** It was in a vision that the spirit came, and the conversation that follows also took place in a vision. The word *tamaththala* ("it appeared") lends support to this, for it signifies *assuming the likeness of another thing*, and this happens only in a vision. Further, the spirit or angel of God appears to His chosen ones only in a vision.

d **(19)** The words *I will give you a pure boy* are the words of the message. The Spirit only conveyed the Divine message. Every word of the Quran is the word of God, but every word was delivered to the Holy Prophet by the angel.

I been unchaste? **21**He said: So (it will be). *Y*our Lord says: It is easy to Me; and that We may make him a sign to people and a mercy from Us.[a] And it is a matter decreed.[b]

22 Then she conceived him, and withdrew with him to a remote place. **23**And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree.[c] She said: Oh, I wish I had died before this, and had been a thing quite forgotten![d] **24**So a voice came to her from beneath her: Do not grieve, surely *y*our Lord has provided a stream beneath *y*ou. **25**And shake towards *y*ou the trunk of the palm-tree, it will drop on *y*ou fresh ripe dates.[e] **26**So eat and drink and be comforted. Then if *y*ou see any mortal, say: Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent, so I will not speak to anyone today.[f]

27 Then she came to her people with him, carrying him.[g]

***a* (21-1)** Jesus was a *sign* to people, in the sense that he was made a prophet, and every prophet is a sign, because the Divine revelation granted to him affords a clear proof of the existence of the Divine Being. Or, he was a sign to the Israelites in particular, because with him prophethood came to an end among the Israelites.

***b* (21-2)** She conceived him in the ordinary way in which women conceive children.

***c* (23-1)** This shows that Mary gave birth to Jesus while on a journey; hence the reference to water and food in v. 24 and 25, such as one can only find in a journey. That she was going to a distant place is shown by v. 22. She may have had recourse to the trunk of a palm-tree to find a support in the throes of childbirth.

***d* (23-2)** Mary gave birth to Jesus under the ordinary circumstances which women experience in giving birth to children. The throes of childbirth were too severe for her to bear, and hence she gave utterance to such words. The reference to the pains of childbirth clearly shows that an ordinary human child was coming into the world. Or, there may be a reference to Genesis 3:16, *In pain you shall bring forth children.*

***e* (25)** The Quran does not accept that Jesus was born on 25th December. It was the time when fresh ripe dates are found on palm-trees. It is now a recognized fact that 25th December was not Jesus' birthday. According to the birth account in Luke 2:8, shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night in the fields, which shows that it was not winter. The 25th of December was taken from the birthday of the Persian sun-god Mithra.

***f* (26)** It was really a kind of fast. Zacharias, as we have already seen, was told not to speak to people for three days.

***g* (27-1)** The conversation in v. 27–33 is alone sufficient to make it clear that this incident relates to a time when Jesus had grown up sufficiently to have been appointed a prophet and to have received Divine revelation. The Quran does not

They said: Mary, *y*ou have indeed brought a strange thing![a] **28**Sister of Aaron,[b] *y*our father was not a wicked man, nor was *y*our mother an unchaste woman! **29**But she pointed to him. They said: How should we speak to one who is a child in the cradle?[c] **30**He said: I am indeed a servant of Allah. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet, **31**and He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and the due charity so long as I live,[d] **32**and to be kind to my mother; [e] and He

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relate stories in all their details, and often omits a number of incidents which are not needed for its purpose. For instance, v. 7–11 relate only Zacharias' receiving the joyful news of a son, while v. 12 asks that son to take hold of the Book with strength. Jesus could only say that he was made a prophet when he was actually entrusted with the mission of a prophet, and not before. Moreover, it is unreasonable to suppose that, as soon as Mary gave birth to the child, she took it to her people to make a show of it. The word *carrying* does not show that she was carrying him in her arms; it means that he was being carried on an animal. Compare 9:92, where some of the companions are spoken of as coming to the Prophet that he might *carry* them, and he is related as replying that he did not have that on which to *carry* them, i.e., animals. Compare Matthew 21:1–7 where the story is related of Jesus entering Jerusalem riding an ass, or an ass and a colt.

a **(27-2)** The reference in Mary's *bringing a strange thing* may be to her having given birth to a son who claimed greater authority than the elders of Israel, with a deeper hint to the calumny against her, for which see 4:156. In his reply Jesus does not make a single reference to the circumstances of his birth. Hence the inference is quite reasonable that the question was directed against the mission of Jesus and not against the circumstances of his birth.

b **(28)** The fact that Mary was devoted to the Temple from the age of three to twelve years shows that she belonged to the priestly class, being of the Levitical race. Hence she is called *sister of Aaron.* The word *ukht,* meaning sister, is by no means limited to the close blood-relationship.

c **(29)** Old and learned Jews would no doubt speak of a young man who was born and brought up before their eyes as *a child in the cradle*, as if disdaining to address one so young.

d **(31)** It is clear that this conversation did not take place when Jesus was an infant in the cradle, but when he had actually been made a prophet. It is absurd to suppose that prayers and charity were enjoined on Jesus while he was only a day old and that he really observed these injunctions at that age. Jesus' answer clearly shows that he was addressing his people after he had been entrusted with the mission of prophethood.

e **(32)** Here only the mother is spoken of, whereas in a similar case in v. 14 John is spoken of as being kind to both parents. This may be due to the fact that Joseph may not have been living at the time when Jesus spoke these words.

has not made me insolent, unblessed. [33]And peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised to life.

34 Such is Jesus son of Mary — a statement of truth about which they dispute. [35]It does not befit Allah that He should take to Himself a son. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a matter He only says to it, Be, and it is. [36]And surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him. This is the right path.[a] [37]But factions from among them differed; so woe to those who disbelieve, because of their presence on a grievous day! [38]How clearly will they hear and see on the day when they come to Us; but the wrongdoers are today in manifest error. [39]And warn them of the day of Regret,[b] when the matter is decided. And they are (now) in negligence and they do not believe. [40]Surely We inherit the earth and those on it, and to Us they are returned.

Section 3: **Abraham**

41 And mention Abraham in the Book. Surely he was a truthful man, a prophet. [42]When he said to his sire: My sire, why do *y*ou worship something which does not hear, nor see, nor can it avail *y*ou at all? [43]My sire, to me indeed has come the knowledge which has not come to *y*ou; so follow me, I will guide *y*ou on a right path. [44]My sire, do not serve the devil. Surely the devil is disobedient to the Beneficent. [45]My sire, surely I fear that a punishment from the Beneficent may afflict *y*ou, so that *y*ou become a friend of the devil.

46 He said: Do *y*ou dislike my gods, Abraham? If *y*ou do not stop, I will certainly drive *y*ou away. And leave me for a time. [47]He said: Peace be on *y*ou! I shall pray my Lord to forgive *y*ou. Surely He is ever Kind to me. [48]And I withdraw from you and what

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Joseph was already an old man when he married Mary, and by the time that the ministry of Jesus begins we find no mention of him even in the Gospels, the mother and brothers being the only relations mentioned. Or, the mother alone is mentioned because the Gospels relate an incident showing that Jesus was rude to his mother (Matthew, 12:48; John, 2:4), and this verse disproves the statement, it being one of the objects of the Quran to clear Jesus of all false charges.

a **(36)** According to Matthew, when Jesus was tempted of the devil, who asked him to worship him, Jesus' reply was: "For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Matthew, 4:10).

b **(39)** The day of Judgment is here called the day of Regret, because man will then regret that he wasted the opportunity given to him to work for his own good.

you call on besides Allah, and I call upon my Lord. Maybe I shall not remain unblessed in calling upon my Lord.

49 So when he withdrew from them and what they worshipped besides Allah, We gave him Isaac and Jacob. And each (of them) We made a prophet.[a] **50**And We gave them of Our mercy, and We granted them a truthful mention of eminence.[b]

Section 4: **Other prophets are raised**

51 And mention Moses in the Book. Surely he was one purified, and was a messenger, a prophet.[c] **52**And We called to him from the blessed side of the mountain, and We made him draw near to Us in communion. **53**And We gave him out of Our mercy his brother Aaron, a prophet. **54**And mention Ishmael in the Book. Surely he was truthful in promise, and he was a messenger, a prophet.[d] **55**And he enjoined on his people prayer and charity, and was one in whom his Lord was well pleased. **56**And mention Idrīs in the Book. Surely he was a truthful man, a prophet, **57**and We raised him to an elevated state.[e]

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a **(49)** It is elsewhere made clear that Jacob was his grandson (11:71, 21:72). Nor should it be supposed that *giving* signifies only the giving of a son, for of Moses it is said in v. 53, *We gave him his brother Aaron, a prophet*, though Aaron was older than Moses.

b **(50)** However humble a life a prophet may lead, he is granted an eminence among later generations, and the record of eminence of a prophet is a truthful one.

c **(51)** *Rasūl*, or *messenger*, means *one who is sent with a message* for the regeneration of people, while *nabī*, or *prophet*, is one who has the gift of prophecy, i.e., who receives a *naba'* or *information* from on High. The elect who are chosen for the regeneration of man are called *prophets* as receiving knowledge from Allah, and *messengers* as delivering to humanity the messages they receive.

d **(54)** When Abraham prayed to the Lord "that Ishmael might live before You", the reply was: "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you" (Genesis, 17:18, 20), which shows that Ishmael was made a prophet. See also 2:124–125, footnotes.

e **(57)** Idrīs is the same as Enoch of the Bible. The word *raf'*, which is used of Jesus, is also used of Enoch, and some commentators therefore misinterpret it as indicating that Enoch was taken up to heaven alive. But the same mistake is made in both cases, for *raf'* signifies *raising to high dignity;* see 3:55 footnote 2. The mistake seems to have arisen from what is said of Enoch in the Bible: "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him" (Genesis, 5:24).

58 These are they on whom Allah bestowed favours, from among the prophets, of the offspring of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Noah, and of the offspring of Abraham and Israel, and of those whom We guided and chose. When the messages of the Beneficent were recited to them, they fell down in submission, weeping. **59**But after them came an evil generation, who wasted prayers and followed lusts, so they will meet with ruin, **60**except those who repent and believe and do good — such will enter the Garden, and they will not be wronged in the least: **61**Gardens of perpetuity which the Beneficent has promised to His servants, in the Unseen. Surely His promise ever comes to pass. **62**They will hear therein no vain discourse, but only, Peace![a] And they have their sustenance therein, morning and evening. **63**This is the Garden which We cause those of Our servants to inherit who keep their duty.

64 And we do not descend but by the command of *y*our Lord. To Him belongs what is before us and what is behind us and what is between these, and *y*our Lord is never forgetful.[b] **65**Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, so serve Him and be patient in His service. Do *y*ou know anyone equal to Him?

Section 5: **How the opponents were dealt with**

66 And says man: When I am dead, shall I truly be brought forth alive? **67**Does not man remember that We created him before, when he was nothing? **68**So by *y*our Lord! We shall certainly gather them together and the devils,[c] then shall We bring them around hell on their knees. **69**Then We shall draw forth from every group those most rebellious against the Beneficent. **70**Again, We certainly know

***a* (62)** This description of the Hereafter shows that the Muslim in this world talks of nothing but peace. Islam is really *peace,* and it is by making peace here with the Creator and His creatures that one can find peace hereafter. This is the great truth underlying the Islamic idea of paradise. The state of *perfect peace* spoken of here is called the *Garden* in v. 63 which the righteous will inherit.

***b* (64)** As the angels brought revelation to previous prophets (indicated in the words *we do not descend*), so they now bring revelation, by the command of the Lord, to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The words, *your Lord is never forgetful*, signify that the promises and prophecies made by God through His prophets could not be forgotten. Thus, after an account of the previous prophets, the subject moves to the revelation of the Holy Prophet for the remainder of the chapter.

***c* (68)** The *devils* here are clearly those humans who lead others to evil.

best those who deserve most to be burned in it. **71**And there is not one of you but shall come to it.[a] This is an unavoidable decree of *y*our Lord.

72 And We shall deliver those who guard against evil,[b] and leave the wrongdoers in it on their knees. **73**And when Our clear messages are recited to them, those who disbelieve say to those who believe: Which of the two groups is better in position and better assembled?[c] **74**And how many a generation have We destroyed before them, who had better possessions and appearance! **75**Say: As for him who is in error, the Beneficent will prolong his length of days; until they see what they were threatened with, either the punishment or the Hour.[d] Then they will know who is worse in position and weaker in forces.[e] **76**And Allah increases in guidance those who go aright. And the ever-abiding, the good works, are better with *y*our Lord in reward and yield better return.

77 Have *y*ou seen him who disbelieves in Our messages and says: I shall certainly be given wealth and children?[f] **78**Has he gained knowledge of the unseen, or received a promise from the Beneficent? **79**By no means! We write down what he says, and We shall lengthen to him the length of the punishment, **80**and We shall inherit from him what he says, and he will come to Us alone.[g] **81**And they have taken gods besides Allah, that they should be to

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a **(71)** The *wicked* only are spoken of, as the context shows clearly. That the righteous will not go to hell is made clear further on: "The day when We gather the dutiful to the Beneficent to receive honours, and drive the guilty to hell, as thirsty beasts" (v. 85–86). According to 21:102, *the righteous will not hear the faintest sound of hell*.

b **(72)** The first word of this verse, *thumma,* generally denotes *then* or *afterwards,* but it has often the meaning of *and.* It is wrong to suppose that the righteous will be first cast into hell and then delivered.

c **(73)** That is, they are proud of their great wealth and numerous forces.

d **(75-1)** The *Hour* signifies the *hour of doom*, when their power will be utterly destroyed. In comparison with this is the lighter "punishment".

e **(75-2)** In these words it is clearly indicated that the time will come when they will find themselves in an evil condition, and their forces weaker than the forces of Truth.

f **(77)** They have no eye for the higher values of life; all they want is wealth and children or followers.

g **(80)** The reference is to his saying in v. 77: "I shall certainly be given wealth and children". God's inheriting thus means that their wealth and children will be taken away from them and ultimately be a source of strength to Islam.

them a source of strength — [82]By no means! They will soon deny their worshipping them, and be their adversaries.

Section 6: **False doctrine of Sonship**

83 Do *y*ou not see that We send the devils against the disbelievers, inciting them provokingly? [84]So make no haste against them. We only number out to them a number (of days). [85]The day when We gather the dutiful to the Beneficent to receive honours, [86]and drive the guilty to hell, as thirsty beasts. [87]They have no power of intercession, except him who has made a covenant with the Beneficent.

88 And they say: The Beneficent has taken to Himself a son. [89]Certainly you make a detestable assertion! [90]The heavens may almost be torn apart at it, and the earth split, and the mountains crumble down in pieces, [91]that they ascribe a son to the Beneficent! [92]And it is not worthy of the Beneficent that He should take to Himself a son.[a] [93]There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes to the Beneficent as a servant. [94]Certainly He comprehends them, and has numbered them all. [95]And everyone of them will come to Him on the day of Resurrection, alone.

96 Those who believe and do good deeds, for them the Beneficent will surely bring about love.[b] [97]So We have made it easy in

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***a* (92)** Verses 89–93 contain a most emphatic and clear condemnation of the Christian doctrine of the Godhead of Jesus Christ. As this chapter belongs to about the fifth year of the Holy Prophet's mission, it shows that Islam had set before itself from the very first the grand object of the reformation of Christianity. The particular point on which stress is laid in this chapter, as against the fundamental errors of the Christian religion, *Sonship* and *Atonement*, is that God is *Raḥmān* (Beneficent), and does not require any compensation to forgive sinners. It is for this reason that the name *Raḥmān*, in preference to all other names of the Divine Being, is mentioned over and over again in this chapter, and the key to the whole position is contained in v. 92 in the words: *It is not worthy of the Beneficent that He should take to Himself a son*. In fact, the doctrine of Atonement is contradicted by Christ's own words in the Lord's prayer: "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew, 6:12). A man is said to forgive his debtor when he remits the debt and does not exact any compensation. Even thus does God forgive sinners; He needs no compensation.

***b* (96)** Allah's *bringing about love* for the righteous means that He loves them Himself and inspires love for them in the hearts of other people, while they

*y*our tongue, only that *y*ou should give good news by it to those who guard against evil, and should warn by it a contentious people. **98**And how many a generation before them have We destroyed! Can *y*ou see anyone of them or hear a sound of them?

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also love Allah as well as their fellow-beings. The righteous servants of God are opposed at first, but gradually their goodness prevails and they are loved and admired. There is a prophetic reference here to the great love with which the hearts of the enemies of the Prophet were to be inspired in the near future, and even today the hearts of people are being inspired with greater and greater love for him as the world witnesses the good which he did to humanity.

Chapter 20

Ṭā Hā

The initial letters of this chapter serve as its title. Beginning by declaring that the Quran was revealed to be triumphant in the world, it deals at length with the story of Moses, showing how he was ultimately successful. It follows this by a description of the opposition to the Prophet Muhammad and the consequences of that opposition. This chapter was revealed in the early period at Makkah, about or before the fifth year of the Holy Prophet's mission.

Section 1: **Moses is called**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O man,[a] **2**We have not revealed the Quran to *y*ou that *y*ou may be unsuccessful;[b] **3**but it is a reminder to him who fears: **4**a revelation from Him Who created the earth and the high heavens.[c] **5**The Beneficent is established on the Throne of Power. **6**To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and whatever is between them and whatever is beneath the soil. **7**And if *y*ou utter the saying aloud, surely He knows the secret (that you hide), and what is yet more hidden.[d] **8**Allah — there is no God but He. His are the most beautiful names.

9 And has the story of Moses come to *y*ou? **10**When he saw a fire, he said to his family: Wait, I see a fire; maybe I will bring to

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a **(1)** *Ṭā hā,* a combination of the two letters *ṭā* and *hā,* is, according to various early commentators, a word meaning *O man*. It is also considered to be a name of the Holy Prophet.

b **(2)** That is, it could not be that the Prophet, to whom the Quran was revealed, should remain unsuccessful in bringing about the transformation for which it was revealed. It is a consolation, and a clear prophecy, that a mighty transformation will be brought about, not only in Arabia but in the whole world, for that was the object which the Quran had set out to accomplish from the first.

c **(4)** The Quran cannot be a failure, because it is a manifestation of the will of Him Who holds sway over all.

d **(7)** The *secret* is what a man hides in his heart, and *what is yet more hidden* is what is in the subconscious mind. Both are known alike to Allah.

you a live coal from it or find guidance at the fire.[a] **11**So when he came to it, a voice came: O Moses, **12**surely I am *y*our Lord, so take off *y*our shoes; surely *y*ou are in the sacred valley Tuwā.[b] **13**And I have chosen *y*ou so listen to what is revealed: **14**Surely I am Allah, there is no God but I, so serve Me, and keep up prayer for My remembrance. **15**Surely the Hour is coming — I am about to make it manifest[c] — so that every soul may be rewarded as it strives. **16**So do not let him who does not believe in it, and follows his low desire, turn *y*ou away from it, so that *y*ou perish.

17 And what is this in *y*our right hand, O Moses? **18**He said: This is my staff — I lean on it, and I beat leaves with it for my sheep, and I have other uses for it. **19**He said: Throw it down, O Moses. **20**So he threw it down, and — lo! — it was a snake, gliding.[d] **21**He said: Take hold of it and do not fear. We shall return it to its former state. **22**And press *y*our hand to *y*our side, it will come out white without harm — another sign:[e] **23**that We may show *y*ou

***a* (10)** As the verses that follow show, Moses received a Divine revelation on this occasion, and his seeing the fire was also a part of the revelation; it was with the spiritual eye that he saw it. The Quran has stated elsewhere that revelation is received only in three ways (42:51), and in each of these the recipient is really given particular senses with which to feel and see things.

***b* (12)** The command to take off the shoes is a metaphorical expression for *making the heart vacant from care for family and property*. According to some, it is a command to stay (as if to say, make yourself at home).

***c* (15)** *Ikhfā'* is one of the words which convey contrary significances, *concealing* or *removing that which conceals* a thing. But that here it does not mean *concealing* is made clear by the context. It is the coming of the Hour and the meting out of rewards and punishments that the verse deals with, which is clearly *removing the veil* or *making* the hour *manifest*. Note that the Hour does not necessarily signify the Resurrection; on the other hand, it very often indicates the *doom* of a people, *the hour of the departure of their glory and power*.

***d* (20)** All this was experienced by Moses in that particular state in which the recipient of a revelation finds himself at the time of the revelation; see 7:108 footnote. What was shown to Moses on this occasion had a deeper significance; see v. 23, where the object of showing these signs is stated to be that *We may show you of Our greater signs*. Thus the two signs mentioned here were really indications of something greater. The word *'aṣā* (staff) stands metaphorically for a community. Hence the sight of his staff becoming a gliding serpent was shown to him as an indication that his community, i.e., the Israelites, who had been reduced to a state of slavery under Pharaoh, would soon become a living nation.

***e* (22)** Bearing in mind what has been said above, this has also a deeper meaning. A *white hand* signifies *an argument made very clear*. The deeper significance in this case was that his arguments would prevail.

of Our greater signs. **24**Go to Pharaoh, surely he has exceeded the limits.

Section 2: **Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh**

25 He said: My Lord, expand my breast for me (with knowledge), **26**and ease my task for me, **27**and loosen the knot from my tongue,[a] **28**(that) they may understand my word. **29**And give to me a helper from my family, **30**Aaron, my brother; **31**add to my strength by him, **32**and make him share my task — **33**so that we may glorify You much, **34**and much remember You. **35**Surely, You are ever seeing us.

36 He said: *Y*ou are indeed granted *y*our petition, O Moses. **37**And indeed We bestowed on *y*ou a favour at another time, **38**when We revealed to *y*our mother what was revealed: **39**Put him into a chest, then put it into the river, the river will cast it upon the shore — there an enemy to Me and an enemy to him shall take him up. And I shed on *y*ou love from Me; and that *y*ou may be brought up before My eyes.[b] **40**When *y*our sister went and said: Shall I direct you to one who will take charge of him? So We brought *y*ou back to *y*our mother that she might be comforted and she should not grieve. And *y*ou killed a man, then We delivered *y*ou from grief, and tried *y*ou with (many) trials. Then *y*ou stayed for years among the people of Midian. Then *y*ou came here as ordained, O Moses. **41**And I have chosen *y*ou for Myself.

42 Go *y*ou and *y*our brother with My messages and do not be remiss in remembering Me. **43**Go both of you to Pharaoh, surely he is inordinate; **44**then speak to him a gentle word, perhaps he may be mindful or fear. **45**They said: Our Lord, we fear that he may hasten to do us harm or be inordinate. **46**He said: Do not fear, surely I am with you — I do hear and see. **47**So go to him and say: Surely we are two messengers of *y*our Lord,[c] so send forth the Children of

a **(27)** By a man who has a knot in his tongue is meant *a man unable to speak freely.*

b **(39)** Moses was born at a time when Pharaoh had commanded all male children born to the Israelites to be thrown into the Nile. Moses' mother kept him concealed for three months, and at last, unable to hide him any longer, cast him upon the river in an ark of bulrushes, whence he was picked up by Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus, 2:1–10).

c **(47)** Both Moses and Aaron were messengers (sing. *rasūl*) of God.

Israel with us, and do not torment them. Indeed we have brought *y*ou a message from *y*our Lord, and peace be on him who follows the guidance. **48**It has indeed been revealed to us that punishment will overtake him who rejects and turns away.[a]

49 (Pharaoh) said: Who is your Lord, Moses? **50**He said: Our Lord is He Who gives to everything its creation, then guides (it).[b] **51**He said: What then is the state of the former generations? **52**He said: The knowledge of that is with my Lord in a book; my Lord neither makes error nor forgets — **53**Who made the earth for you an expanse and made for you paths in it and sent down water from the clouds. Then with that We bring forth pairs of various herbs. **54**Eat and pasture your cattle. Surely there are signs in this for those who have understanding.

Section 3: **Moses and the enchanters**

55 From it We created you, and into it We shall return you, and from it raise you a second time. **56**And truly We showed him all Our signs but he rejected and refused. **57**Said he: Have *y*ou come to us to turn us out of our land by *y*our enchantment, Moses? **58**We too can bring to *y*ou enchantment like it, so make an appointment between us and *y*ou, which we do not break, neither we nor *y*ou, in a central place. **59**(Moses) said: Your appointment is the day of the Festival, and let the people be gathered in the early forenoon.

60 So Pharaoh went back and settled his plan, then came. **61**Moses said to them: Woe to you! Do not fabricate a lie against Allah or He will destroy you by punishment, and he fails indeed who fabricates (a lie). **62**So they disputed among themselves about their affair and kept the talk secret. **63**They said: These are surely two enchanters who would drive you out from your land by their enchantment, and destroy your excellent institutions. **64**So settle

***a* (48)** This contains a clear warning to Pharaoh of his end in case of rejection. Moses and Aaron were directed to convey this message. The whole account of their actual going to Pharaoh and the delivery of this message is omitted here, and the next verse gives us Pharaoh's reply to their demand.

***b* (50)** This verse contains an argument for the necessity of Divine revelation. It says that, as Allah has created everything, and then given it the qualities and means by which it can attain to perfection — for this is the true significance of *hadā*, i.e., *guides it* (*to its goal*) — so man also stands in need of spiritual and moral directions for his attainment to perfection.

your plan, then come (ranged) in ranks, and he will succeed indeed this day who is uppermost.

65 They said: Moses, will *y*ou throw, or shall we be the first to throw? **66**He said: No, you throw down. Then their cords and their rods — lo! — it appeared to him by their enchantment as if they ran.[a] **67**So Moses conceived fear in his mind.[b] **68**We said: Do not fear, surely *y*ou are the uppermost. **69**And throw down what is in *y*our right hand — it will eat up what they have produced. What they have produced is only the trick of an enchanter, and the enchanter does not succeed wherever he comes from. **70**So the enchanters fell down prostrate, saying: We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses.

71 (Pharaoh) said: You believe in him before I give you permission! Surely he is your chief who taught you enchantment. So I shall cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides and I shall crucify you on the trunks of palm-trees, and you shall certainly know which of us can give the severer and the more lasting punishment. **72**They said: We cannot prefer *y*ou to the clear arguments that have come to us and to Him Who made us, so decide whatever *y*ou will decide. *Y*ou can only decide about this world's life. **73**Surely we believe in our Lord that He may forgive us our faults and the magic to which *y*ou compelled us. And Allah is Best and Ever-abiding. **74**Whoever comes guilty to his Lord, for him is surely hell. He will neither die in it, nor live.[c] **75**And whoever comes to Him a believer, having done good deeds, for them are high ranks — **76**Gardens of perpetuity, in which rivers flow, to abide in them. And such is the reward of him who purifies himself.

Section 4: **The Israelites worship the calf**

77 And certainly We revealed to Moses: Travel by night with My servants, then strike for them a dry path in the sea, not fearing to be caught, nor being afraid.[d] **78**So Pharaoh followed them with

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a **(66)** The forces of untruth appear to carry the day for a while, but are soon vanquished; see v. 69. Also compare 7:117, where these *cords and rods* are described as *their lies*.

b **(67)** Moses feared that people might be misled.

c **(74)** Those in hell are not alive, because spiritually they are dead, and they are not dead because death would mean the cessation of their torments.

d **(77)** This shows that there was at that time a dry path in the sea; see 2:50.

his armies, then the sea covered them that would cover them. **79**And Pharaoh led his people astray and he did not guide aright.

80 O Children of Israel, We truly delivered you from your enemy, and made a covenant with you on the blessed side of the mountain, and sent to you the manna and the quails. **81**Eat of the good things We have provided for you, and do not exceed the limits in that respect, so that My wrath comes upon you; and he on whom My wrath comes, he perishes indeed. **82**And surely I am Forgiving toward him who repents and believes and does good, then walks aright.

83 And what made *y*ou hasten from *y*our people, O Moses? **84**He said: They are here on my track, and I hastened on to You, my Lord, that You might be pleased. **85**He said: Surely We have tried *y*our people in *y*our absence, and the Sāmirī [a] has led them astray. **86**So Moses returned to his people angry, sorrowing. He said: My people, did not your Lord promise you a goodly promise? Did the promised time, then, seem long to you, or did you wish that displeasure from your Lord should come upon you, so that you broke (your) promise to me? **87**They said: We did not break the promise to *y*ou of our own accord, but we were made to bear the burdens of the ornaments of the people, then we cast them away, and thus did the Sāmirī suggest.[b] **88**Then he brought forth for them a calf, a (lifeless) body, having a lowing sound,[c] so they said: This is your god and the god of Moses; but he forgot. **89**Could they not see that it returned no reply to them,[d] nor controlled any harm or benefit for them?

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a **(85)** The verse shows that some person other than Aaron was responsible for making the calf. From Rabbinical literature it appears that the Egyptians who had come with the Israelites were foremost in demanding the making of the calf.

b **(87)** The Israelites may have borrowed ornaments from the Egyptians as stated in Exodus 12:35, and the reference may be to those ornaments, or the significance may simply be that the nomadic tribes of Israel, who were unaccustomed to these things, had imbibed these habits from the Egyptians, and now gave up those ornaments at the suggestion of the Sāmirī. The reply of the people states clearly they had not done it of *their own accord*, and hence the concluding words are in reference to the suggestions cast into the minds of the people by the Sāmirī.

c **(88)** It had neither a voice nor a soul, but it was only a sound produced by the air passing through the hollow metal of which it was made.

d **(89)** The argument in this verse shows that God not only listens to prayers but also gives a reply to His true worshippers when they pray to Him.

Section 5: **The end of calf-worship**

90 And Aaron indeed had said to them before: My people, you are only tried by it, and surely your Lord is the Beneficent God, so follow me and obey my order.[a] **91**They said: We shall not cease to keep to its worship until Moses returns to us. **92**(Moses) said: Aaron, what prevented *y*ou, when *y*ou saw them going astray, **93**that *y*ou did not follow me? Have *y*ou, then, disobeyed my order? **94**He said: Son of my mother, do not seize me by my beard, nor by my head. Surely I was afraid *y*ou would say: *Y*ou have caused division among the Children of Israel and not waited for my word. **95**(Moses) said: What was *y*our object, Sāmirī? **96**He said: I perceived what they did not perceive, so I took a handful from the footprints of the messenger then I threw it away. Thus did my soul entice me.[b] **97**He said: Go away then! It is (the punishment) for *y*ou in this life to say, Do not touch (me). And surely for *y*ou is a promise which shall not fail. And look at *y*our god to whose worship *y*ou have kept. We will certainly burn it, then we will scatter it in the sea.[c] **98**Your Lord is only Allah, there is no God but He. He comprehends all things in (His) knowledge.

99 Thus We relate to *y*ou some news of what has happened before. And indeed We have given *y*ou a Reminder from Ourselves. **100**Whoever turns away from it, he will surely bear a burden on the day of Resurrection, **101**abiding in this (state). And evil will be their burden on the day of Resurrection — **102**the day when the trumpet

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***a* (90)** From this it is clear that not only had Aaron no part in making the calf, but he even enjoined his people to give up its worship. The Quran here contradicts the Bible.

***b* (96)** The stories which many commentators have related under this verse are all baseless. The messenger is evidently Moses himself, and his footprints (*athar*) signify his *sunnah*, i.e., his *practices and sayings*, a significance to which all authorities agree, the word being well known in Muslim religious literature. The *taking a handful* means *a small part of it*. The man who made the calf thus asserts that he had a clearer perception of things than the Israelites, that he accepted the teachings of Moses only partially, and confesses that he now threw off even that part and made a calf for worship.

***c* (97)** This shows that the ashes of the calf were thrown into the sea, and the story of the Israelites being made to drink of water mixed with the ashes of the calf is not, therefore, credited by the Quran, which here again contradicts the Bible. The punishment given to the Sāmirī is that of an outcast in society, who is prohibited from having any relations with the Israelite people.

is blown; and We shall gather the guilty, blind,[a] on that day, **103**consulting together secretly: You stayed only ten (days).[b] **104**We know best what they say when the fairest of them in course would say: You stayed only a day.[c]

Section 6: **The Prophet's opponents**

105 And they ask *y*ou about the mountains.[d] Say: My Lord will scatter them, as scattered dust, **106**then leave it a plain, smooth, level, **107**on which *y*ou see no crookedness nor unevenness. **108**On that day they will follow the Inviter, in whom is no crookedness; and the voices are low before the Beneficent God, so that *y*ou hear nothing but a soft sound.[e] **109**On that day no intercession avails except of him whom the Beneficent allows, and whose word He is pleased with. **110**He knows what is before them and what is behind them, while they cannot encompass it in knowledge. **111**And faces shall be humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent. And he who bears wrongdoing is indeed undone. **112**And whoever does good works, and is a believer, has no fear of injustice nor of the withholding of what is (his) due.

113 And thus have We sent it down an Arabic Quran, and have distinctly set forth in it some threats that they may guard against evil, or that it may be a reminder for them. **114**Supremely exalted then is Allah, the King, the Truth. And do not make haste with the

***a* (102)** The word *zurq* means blue-eyed, but may signify *blind*, in reference to the guilty being raised up blind in the Resurrection, as in v. 124.

***b* (103)** The object of "ten" is omitted, and what may be indicated here is that they will have enjoyed ten centuries of great prosperity.

***c* (104)** Because a day is equal to a thousand years; see 22:47. It is the man who reminds them of this Divine promise who is called *the fairest of them in course*.

***d* (105)** The word *jabal* means a *mountain*, as well as the *lord* or *chief of a people*. That the latter significance is intended here is shown by the context; see in particular v. 108: "On that day they will follow the Inviter". Verses 106–107 are to be taken in the same sense: they point to the removal of all obstacles that hindered the advance of Truth.

***e* (108)** The Inviter in whom there is no crookedness is no other than the Holy Prophet, as is clearly stated elsewhere: "Praise be to Allah, Who revealed the Book to His servant, and did not allow in it any crookedness" (18:1). The whole verse clearly points to a time when Islam would be completely established, and instead of opposition the *voices would be low* before the Beneficent. The lowness of the voice indicates submission.

Quran before its revelation is made complete to *y*ou, and say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge.[a] **115**And certainly We gave a commandment to Adam before, but he forgot; and We found in him no resolve (to disobey).[b]

Section 7: **The devil's misleading**

116 And when We said to the angels: Be submissive to Adam, they submitted, but not Iblīs; he refused. **117**We said: O Adam, this is an enemy to *y*ou and to *y*our wife; so do not let him drive you both out of the garden so that *y*ou are unhappy. **118**Surely it is granted to *y*ou that *y*ou are not hungry therein, nor naked, **119**and that *y*ou are not thirsty therein, nor exposed to the sun's heat.[c] **120**But the devil made an evil suggestion to him; he said: O Adam, shall I lead *y*ou to the tree of immortality and a kingdom which does not decay? **121**So they both ate of it, then their evil inclinations became manifest to them, and they began to cover themselves with the leaves of the garden. And Adam disobeyed his Lord, and was disappointed.[d]

***a* (114)** The Holy Prophet no doubt desired that it should be made clear to him how the great transformation would be brought about and when the severe opposition which he was facing would come to an end. He is here told that he should not make haste with regard to what was promised in the Quran. The process will be gradual and meanwhile he should pray for more and more knowledge, for it was through knowledge that this great transformation was to be brought about. Even today a spiritual transformation can be brought about by spreading knowledge of the Quran, which is the greatest spiritual force that the world has ever seen, and it is only on account of being ignorant of this great spiritual force that the world remains in darkness.

***b* (115)** This makes it clear that there was no intention on Adam's part to disobey God's command, or *no resolve to disobey*.

***c* (119)** The garden of which a picture is given here is an earthly garden in which all the comforts necessary for man are made available. Allegorically it signifies a state of contentment or rest in which there is no yearning either to good or to evil, being as it were a state of inertia, devoid of exertion or ambition.

***d* (121)** While in the picture of the garden drawn above in v. 118–119 mention is made of four things, the consequence of getting out of that state is only one: *their evil inclinations or their shame becoming manifest to them*. An explanation of this is found in 7:26, where it is said: "O children of Adam, We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame and (clothing) for beauty; and clothing that guards against evil — that is the best." Thus it is the clothing that guards against evil that is really spoken of here, and by the manifestation of

122 Then his Lord chose him, so He turned to him and guided (him). **123**He said: Go forth from this (state) both — all (of you) — some of you are enemies of others. Surely a guidance from Me will come to you; then whoever follows My guidance, he will not go astray nor be unhappy. **124**And whoever turns away from My Reminder, for him is surely a (spiritually) deprived life, and We shall raise him up blind on the day of Resurrection.[a] **125**He will say: My Lord, why have You raised me up blind, while I used to see? **126**He will say: Thus did Our messages come to *y*ou, but *y*ou neglected them. And thus are *y*ou forsaken this day. **127**And thus do We recompense him who is extravagant and does not believe in the messages of his Lord. And certainly the punishment of the Hereafter is severer and more lasting. **128**Is it not clear to them how many of the generations, in whose dwellings they go about, We destroyed before them? Surely there are signs in this for those who have understanding.

Section 8: **Punishment is certain**

129 And if a word had not gone forth from *y*our Lord, and a term been fixed, it would surely have come upon them. **130**So bear patiently what they say, and celebrate the praise of *y*our Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and glorify (Him) during the hours of the night and parts of the day, that *y*ou may be well pleased.[b] **131**And do not strain *y*our eyes (with desire) at what We

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the shame is meant the consciousness of having done something evil. The allegorical nature of what is so often related as the story of Adam is thus evident. It will be further seen that the remedy pointed out is of a spiritual nature, as here in v. 123–124 and in 2:38. This shows that the spiritual aspect of man's life and not the physical one is the real theme of Adam's story.

***a* (124)** The person who shuts his eyes to the Reminder leads a spiritually deprived life because he does not receive spiritual blessings. It is only a contented mind that brings ease and comfort to man, and contentment comes only through faith in God.

***b* (130)** The Holy Prophet, while told to bear persecutions patiently for a time, is also told to seek comfort in prayer. And he did find comfort in prayer under the severest persecutions. "The coolness of my eyes is in prayer," he is reported to have said (Nasa'i, 36:1, hadith 3939). This verse speaks of the five obligatory prayers and the two optional ones. Before the rising of the sun is the dawn prayer (*Fajr*), before its setting the *'Aṣr* prayer. Three prayers, the *Maghrib*, the *'Ishā'* and the *Tahajjud* (the last named being optional), occur during the hours of the night, while during parts of the day are the *Ẓuhr* and the *Ḍuḥā*, the latter again being optional, being a short prayer in the early forenoon.

have provided different classes of them with — the splendour of this world's life — that We may try them by means of it. And the sustenance of *y*our Lord is better and more lasting. **132**And enjoin prayer on *y*our people, and steadily adhere to it. We do not ask from *y*ou a sustenance. We provide for *y*ou. And the (good) end is for guarding against evil.

133 And they say: Why does he not bring us a sign from his Lord? Has not a clear evidence come to them of what is in the previous Books?[a] **134**And if We had destroyed them with punishment before it, they would have said: Our Lord, why did You not send to us a messenger, so that we might have followed Your messages before we met disgrace and shame? **135** Say: Everyone (of us) is waiting, so wait. Soon you will come to know who is the follower of the even path and who goes aright.

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a **(133)** The Quran is here called a clear evidence of what is contained in the previous Books, because it fulfils their prophecies and corroborates their truth.

Chapter 21

Al-Anbiyā' The Prophets

This chapter deals with the deliverance of the prophets, hence its title, and the ultimate triumph of their cause. It tells us that judgment on the opponents is approaching and the truth must triumph now as always. Then it draws attention to the truth of revelation, after which it speaks of God's merciful dealing with people as this is how the Holy Prophet's opponents would be dealt with. Next, examples of a number of prophets are cited who were delivered from their enemies. At the end we are told that the righteous will be made to inherit the land. This chapter was revealed in the early period at Makkah, about or before the fifth year of the Holy Prophet's mission.

Section 1: **Judgment approaches**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Part 17

1 Their reckoning draws near to people, and they turn away in heedlessness. **2**No new Reminder comes to them from their Lord but they hear it while they play, **3**their hearts trifling. And they — the wrongdoers — counsel in secret: He is nothing but a mortal like yourselves; will you then yield to enchantment while you see? **4**He said: My Lord knows (every) utterance in the heaven and the earth, and He is the Hearer, the Knower.

5 Indeed, say they: Confused dreams! Rather, he has forged it! Rather, he is a poet! So let him bring us a sign such as the former (prophets) were sent (with).[a] **6**Not a town believed before them

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***a* (5)** The Quraish were quite puzzled, and hostile critics of the Quran are still puzzled, what they could liken the Quran to. They first call it *siḥr*, i.e., *skilful eloquence*, because, despite their opposition to it, it had an attraction for them. But then there are prophecies which mere eloquence cannot produce, so they call it *confused dreams* or *medleys of dreams*. Then they think that there is a settled purpose in it, by reason of its asserting the Prophet's triumph and the discomfiture of his powerful enemies, so they call it an intentional *forgery*; and lastly, as if to devise one word combining all these, they call him a *poet*. Then they demand a sign like one given to the former prophets, meaning their destruction, because the Quran had repeatedly called their attention to the fate of those who had rejected the truth before them.

which We destroyed: will they then believe?[a] **7**And We did not send before *y*ou any but men to whom We sent revelation; so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know. **8**Nor did We give them bodies not eating food, nor did they live forever.[b] **9**Then We made Our promise good to them; so We delivered them and whom We pleased, and We destroyed the extravagant. **10**Certainly We have revealed to you a Book which will give you eminence. Do you not then understand?[c]

Section 2: **Truth has always triumphed**

11 And how many a town which was unjust did We demolish, and We raised up after it another people! **12**So when they felt Our might, lo! — they began to flee from it. **13**Do not flee and return to the easy lives which you led, and to your dwellings, that you may be questioned. **14**They said: O woe to us! Surely we were unjust. **15**And this cry of theirs did not cease till We made them cut off, extinct.

16 And We did not create the heaven and the earth and all that is between them for sport.[d] **17**If We had wished to take a pastime, We would have taken it from before Ourselves; by no means would We do (so). **18**Indeed, We hurl the Truth against falsehood, so it knocks out its brains, and — lo! — it vanishes.[e] And woe to you

***a* (6)** They are told in reply that persistence in wickedness and disbelief has always been punished with destruction.

***b* (8)** Thus every prophet had a mortal body needing food for its support, and every one of them tasted of death. Therefore Jesus also must have had a body which stood in need of food and must have tasted of death. The idea that he is alive is clearly opposed to this verse.

***c* (10)** Whenever the opponents demand that the threatened punishment should come, the reply always is that the Quran is a blessing and a mercy for them. The same truth is expressed here. They are told that the Quran has been revealed to make them a great and eminent nation in the world. *Dẖikr* means *eminence, fame, renown, honour* as well as *reminder*. Also see 2:152 footnote.

***d* (16)** They were made to witness signs of the truth of the Prophet and they are now told to bear in mind that these signs were not in vain. In nature every cause has an effect and every end is achieved by means. Life must be taken seriously, not as a jest.

***e* (18)** Mark the deep conviction of the Prophet as to the ultimate triumph of Truth in the world. Truth had dawned on his mind in full brightness. The forces of darkness and falsehood, which were uppermost in Arabia when these words were uttered, were brought to naught in his lifetime and, however powerful they may appear to be, they cannot even today make a stand before the march of Truth.

for what you describe! [19]And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And those who are with Him are not too proud to serve Him, nor are they weary. [20]They glorify (Him) night and day — they do not tire.

21 Or have they taken gods from the earth who give life? [22]If there were in them gods besides Allah, they would both have been in disorder. So glory be to Allah, the Lord of the Throne, being above what they describe![a] [23]He cannot be questioned as to what He does, and they will be questioned. [24]Or, have they taken gods besides Him? Say: Bring your proof. This is the reminder of those with me and the reminder of those before me.[b] But most of them do not know the Truth, so they turn away. [25]And We sent no messenger before *y*ou but We revealed to him that there is no God but Me, so serve Me.

26 And they say: The Beneficent has taken to Himself a son. Glory be to Him! No, they are honoured servants[c] — [27]they do not speak before He speaks, and according to His command they act.[d] [28]He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves, and for fear of Him they tremble. [29]And whoever of them should say, I am a god besides Him, such a one We recompense with hell. Thus We reward the unjust.

***a* (22)** There is order in the universe because one law pervades the whole of it, and one law clearly points to one Author and Maintainer of that law. Note that here Allah is spoken of as *Rabb al-'Arsh*, the Nourisher to perfection or Lord of the Throne, so that the Throne itself is sustained by God, and it is not God Who is sustained by the Throne.

***b* (24)** The great and fundamental truth of the Unity of Allah is common to all religions; no prophet ever taught polytheism.

***c* (26)** Refuting the doctrine that Jesus is the son of God, it is added that *they are honoured servants*. The words draw attention to the fact that others besides Jesus were spoken of as the sons of God, but that the title signified nothing more than that they were honoured servants, and that therefore Jesus was the son of God exactly in the same sense.

***d* (27)** This verse affords a conclusive testimony for the sinlessness of prophets. In the first place they do not speak till Allah has spoken, i.e., they speak according to what He has taught them, not speaking of their own accord. And secondly, when they act, they act according to His commandment. Thus both their words and deeds are in accordance with Divine will, and therefore sin or disobedience of God cannot be attributed to them. The context shows clearly that the verse speaks of prophets, and not of angels.

Section 3: **Truth of Revelation**

30 Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were closed up, so We split them apart.[a] And We made from water everything living.[b] Will they not then believe? **31**And We made firm mountains in the earth in case it should quake with them, and We made in it wide ways that they might follow a right direction.[c] **32**And We have made the heaven a guarded canopy; yet they turn away from its signs.[d] **33**And He it is Who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon. All float in orbits.

34 And We did not grant living forever to any mortal before *y*ou. If *y*ou die, will they live forever? **35**Every soul must taste of death. And We test you by evil and good by way of trial. And to Us you are returned.[e] **36**And when those who disbelieve see *y*ou, they treat *y*ou only with mockery: Is this he who speaks of your gods?

***a* (30-1)** The heavens and the earth may stand here for the whole universe, or for the solar system in particular, which has developed out of a nebular mass, and the separation may refer to the starry creation or to the throwing off of the planets of the solar system, and the great symmetry of its arrangement and the motions of the various bodies. There is a reference to the orbits of the various planets further on in v. 33. But there may also be a deeper allusion in the *closing up* of the heavens and the earth to the cessation of Divine revelation for a time before the advent of the Holy Prophet, which was marked by the absence of a prophet in the world for six hundred years and the prevalence of corruption all over the world. The opening up of the heavens and the earth would in this case signify the coming of revelation, which brought life to the world. In physical nature too, rain opens up the earth.

***b* (30-2)** While this statement reveals a remarkable truth in the physical world, a truth which science has established only recently, *that water is the source of all life*, it draws attention to the equally remarkable spiritual truth that it is only by Divine revelation, which is again and again compared with water in the Quran, that life is given to a world otherwise dead in sin and corruption.

***c* (31)** See 16:15 and footnote. The first part of the verse may also be translated as *We made firm mountains in the earth that they might be a source of benefit to you*. Compare 79:32–33. In the latter part there may be a deeper reference to the ways pointed out by prophets among every nation.

***d* (32)** Arabia had its spiritualists, astrologers and diviners who pretended to have access to the secrets of heaven; see 67:5. They are told that they cannot have any such access. Or, the meaning is that revelation from God (called here *heaven*) is guarded against all attacks.

***e* (35)** They were afflicted with small evils, and the removal of these again brought to them a turn of good events. All this was by way of trial; the greater punishment, which was to bring about the final overthrow of their power, was yet in store for them.

And they deny when the Beneficent God is mentioned.[a] **37**Man is created of haste.[b] Soon will I show you My signs, so ask Me not to hasten them. **38**And they say: When will this promise come to pass, if you are truthful?[c] **39**If those who disbelieve only knew the time when they will not be able to ward off the fire from their faces, nor from their backs, and they will not be helped! **40**Indeed, it will come to them all of a sudden and stun them, so they will not have the power to avert it, nor will they be given respite. **41**And messengers before *y*ou were indeed mocked, but that which they mocked at befell those of them who scoffed.[d]

Section 4: **Allah deals with people mercifully**

42 Say: Who guards you by night and by day from the Beneficent?[e] But they turn away at the mention of their Lord. **43**Or, have they gods who can defend them against Us? They cannot help themselves, nor can they be defended from Us. **44**Indeed, We gave provision to these and their fathers, until life was prolonged to them. Do they not see then that We are visiting the land, curtailing it of its sides? Can they then prevail?

45 Say: I warn you only by revelation; and the deaf do not hear the call when they are warned. **46**And if a blast of the punishment of *y*our Lord were to touch them, they would say: O woe to us! Surely we were unjust. **47**And We will set up a just balance on the

a **(36)** The Arabs would not call Allah by the name *al-Raḥmān* (see also 17:110 and 25:60); hence the Beneficent God is here spoken of in contrast with the idols.

b **(37)** So prominent is the characteristic of haste in man that he may be said to have been created, as it were, of haste.

c **(38)** The particular sign which they again and again demanded was that a destructive punishment like that which overtook former people should overtake them.

d **(41)** The rejectors of truth have always scoffed at the idea of being punished. This and the two preceding verses assert in the most forcible words that Truth will finally triumph.

e **(42)** That is, if Allah were not Beneficent to you and guarded you, there is none who could guard you. Or if He, despite His beneficence, were to punish you because of your persistence in evil to such a degree as to call for the wrath of even a Beneficent Master, there would be none to guard you against that punishment.

day of Resurrection, so no soul will be wronged in the least. And if there were the weight of a grain of mustard seed, We will bring it. And Sufficient are We to take account.

48 And certainly We gave Moses and Aaron the criterion and a light and a reminder for those who guard against evil,[a] **49**who fear their Lord in secret and they are fearful of the Hour. **50**And this is a blessed Reminder, which We have revealed. Will you then deny it?

Section 5: **Abraham is delivered**

51 And certainly We gave Abraham his rectitude before, and We knew him well. **52**When he said to his sire and his people: What are these images to whose worship you are devoted? **53**They said: We found our fathers worshipping them. **54**He said: Certainly you have been, you and your fathers, in manifest error. **55**They said: Have *y*ou brought us the truth, or are *y*ou a jester? **56**He said: Indeed, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who created them; and I am one of the bearers of witness to this. **57**And, by Allah! I will certainly plan against your idols after you go away, turning your backs.

58 So he broke them into pieces, except the chief of them, that perhaps they might return to it.[b] **59**They said: Who has done this to our gods? Surely he is one of the wrongdoers. **60**(Some) said: We heard a youth, who is called Abraham, speak of them. **61**They said: Then bring him before the people's eyes, perhaps they may bear witness. **62**They said: Have *y*ou done this to our gods, Abraham? **63**He said: Surely (someone) has done it. The chief of them is this;[c]

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a **(48)** The criterion given to Moses was that he was delivered from the hands of a most powerful enemy. The last verse of the section predicts that a similar sign would be shown in the case of the Prophet Muhammad.

b **(58)** The story of Abraham's breaking the idols is related in Jewish Rabbinical literature.

c **(63)** These words do not mean "No, he has done it, this chief of them." There is a pause after the words "has done it", and the statement "the chief of them is this" is an independent statement. Thus the first words mean *some doer has done it*. The particle *bal* occurring before these words often denotes *and* or *surely*. The idols were taken as gods yet they were not able to help themselves. They were shattered to pieces, yet they could do no harm to their shatterer. Nor could they even tell their votaries who was responsible for this. It should be further noted that Abraham never tried to conceal what he had done. In fact,

so ask them, if they can speak. **64**Then they turned to themselves and said: Surely you yourselves are wrongdoers; **65**then they were made to hang down their heads:[a] You know indeed that they do not speak. **66**He said: Do you then serve besides Allah what does you no good, nor harms you? **67**Enough of you and what you serve besides Allah! Have you no sense?

68 They said: Burn him, and help your gods, if you are going to do (anything). **69**We said: O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham:[b] **70**And they intended a plan against him, but We made them the greater losers. **71**And We delivered him and Lot (directing them) to the land which We had blessed for the nations. **72**And We gave him Isaac; and Jacob, a son's son. And We made (them) all good. **73**And We made them leaders who guided (people) by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of charity, and Us (alone) they served; **74**and to Lot We gave wisdom and knowledge, and We delivered him from the town which committed wicked deeds. Surely they were an evil people, transgressors; **75**and We admitted him to Our mercy; surely he was from among the righteous.

Section 6: **Allah always delivers prophets**

76 And Noah, when he cried before (this), so We answered him,

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before breaking the idols he had warned the people that he would plan against their idols; see v. 57. The object of sparing the chief idol was, as made clear in v. 58, *that perhaps they might return to it*. The chief was yet safe, they should have argued within themselves, why not pray to him to find out who broke the others. This is hinted at in v. 64, where they are made to confess their own wrongdoing in worshipping things which could do them no good or harm (v. 66).

a **(65)** *They were made to hang down their heads* on account of shame, for their deities proved so helpless as to be unable to name even the person who did them injury.

b **(69)** The fire was turned into *coolness* and *peace* for Abraham. The Quran does not state anywhere that Abraham was actually cast into a fire. His opponents had no doubt decided to *burn him*, as stated here, or *to kill him* or *burn him* (29:24). But here in v. 70, as well as in 37:98, we are told in clear words that *they intended a plan against him, but We made them the greater losers* (v. 70), or *We brought them low* (37:98). This shows that their plan was ineffective. According to 29:24, Allah delivered him from the fire, before being thrown into or after being thrown into it, it does not say. Verse 71 states that the delivery was brought about by means of a journey to another land. It was thus a *flight* to another place like the Holy Prophet's Flight to Madinah, and in the history of Abraham there is a deeper reference to the history of the Prophet himself.

and delivered him and his people from the great calamity. **77**And We helped him against the people who rejected Our messages. Surely they were an evil people, so We drowned them all.

78 And David and Solomon, when they gave judgment concerning the field, when the people's sheep strayed into it by night, and We were bearers of witness to their judgment. **79**So We made Solomon to understand it. And to each (of them) We gave wisdom and knowledge. And We made the mountains, declaring (Our) glory, and the birds, subservient to David.[a] And We were the Doers. **80**And We taught him the making of coats of mail for you, to protect you in your wars; will you then be grateful?

81 And to Solomon (We subdued) the wind blowing violent, pursuing its course by His command to the land which We had blessed, and We are ever Knower of all things.[b] **82**And of the devils there were those who dived for him and did other work besides that, and We kept guard over them;[c] **83**and Job, when he cried to his Lord: Distress has afflicted me, and You are the most Merciful of those who show mercy! **84**So We responded to him and removed the distress he had, and We gave him (back) his people and more like them with them — a mercy from Us and a reminder to the worshippers.[d]

***a* (79)** Elsewhere it is stated that everything that exists in the heavens or the earth is made subservient to man (45:13); and on various occasions it is mentioned that the rivers, the sea, the sun and the moon, night and day, etc., are made subservient to man (16:12, 16:14, 13:2, etc.). This explains the meaning of making mountains and birds subservient to David. A thing is said to be made subservient to a man when he can use it to his advantage. Note further that everything in the heavens and the earth declares the glory of Allah (17:44). But see 34:10, where a similar statement occurs and may refer to the conquests of David.

***b* (81)** Solomon's fleet did him an important service, and this is what is meant by the wind being made subservient to Solomon. Also compare 14:32: "And He has made the ships subservient to you, to run their course in the sea by His command".

***c* (82)** Elsewhere we have: "And the devils, every builder and diver, and others fettered in chains" (38:37–38). Solomon employed foreigners, whom he had subdued, to do the work of divers and builders. The word *shaiṭān* (or *devil*) signifies *one who is excessively proud, rebellious or audacious*. See also 38:38.

***d* (84)** Job is again mentioned after Solomon in greater detail in 38:41–44. There also he is spoken of as being given *his people* (*ahl*) *and more like them with them*. There, however, we have clear indications that the distress spoken of

85 And Ishmael and Idrīs and Dhu-l-Kifl;[a] all were from among the patient ones; **86**and We admitted them to Our mercy; surely they were from among the good ones. **87**And Dhu-l-Nūn,[b] when he went away in anger,[c] and he thought that We would not constrain him,[d] so he called out among afflictions:[e] There is no God but You, glory be to You! Surely I am a sufferer of loss.[f]

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here relates to some journey which he undertook in connection with his mission. As a result of this journey he lost, or was separated from, his people. It seems that he had to flee to some place of safety, and he ultimately found not only his own people but others like them, i.e., he had other believers in him in his place of refuge. The story of Job as given in the Quran is really a prophetical statement relating to the Prophet's own Flight from Makkah to Madinah, where he met with not only his Makkan followers but also believers in Madinah in about the same number.

***a* (85)** The commentators differ in identifying Dhu-l-Kifl with one of the Biblical prophets, Zacharias, Elias, or Joshua. A more sound suggestion is that he is Ezekiel. This prophet is mentioned only once again, as here without any reference to his history, in 38:48. (*Editor's Note: Dhu-l-Kifl* may stand for *Dhu-l-Kipl,* as the letter *p* is represented by *f* in Arabic, there being no *p* in the Arabic alphabet. *Dhu-l-Kipl* would mean *he who belongs to Kapila,* this being the name of the town in ancient India to which Buddha belonged. According to the clear teachings of the Quran, prophets and messengers of God were sent to every nation: "And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them" — 35:24; see also 10:47, 4:164 and 40:78. Buddha's life and teachings, and his great following, lead us to infer that he was a messenger of God in Quranic terms.)

***b* (87-1)** Dhu-l-Nūn is another name for Jonah, the Arabic equivalent of the latter being *Yūnus*, by which name the prophet is mentioned in 6:86, 10:98 and 37:139. *Nūn* means *a big fish*, and *Dhu-l-Nūn* therefore means *lord of the fish*. In a very early revelation, Jonah is spoken of as the *companion of the fish* (68:48). Both these titles seem to be taken from the incident of the fish; see 37:142.

***c* (87-2)** Evidently what is meant is that he was angry with his people and left them for another place. A prophet's being angry with God is simply unimaginable. Moreover he is spoken of here as *going away*, while no man could think of going away from the presence of the Omnipresent. He was wroth with his people because of their stubbornness. See also 37:140.

***d* (87-3)** Finding his people stubborn, he went away from them and was wroth with them and *thought*, or rather *knew* (*ẓanna*), that some way would be opened for him to bring people to guidance somewhere. These words may also mean: *he thought We would not decree against him.*

***e* (87-4)** Literally, *darkness.* Difficulty is compared to *darkness* because of the inability of a person to find his way when in difficulty, as when in darkness.

***f* (87-5)** The word *ẓulm* may mean anything from the slightest falling off from one's duty to the greatest transgression. It is used sometimes in a good sense

88So We responded to him and delivered him from grief. And thus do We deliver the believers. **89**And Zacharias, when he cried to his Lord: My Lord, do not leave me alone and You are the Best of inheritors![a] **90**So We responded to him and gave him John and made his wife fit for him.[b] Surely they used to hasten in (doing) good deeds and called upon Us, hoping and fearing; and they were humble before Us. **91**And she who guarded her chastity,[c] so We breathed into her of Our inspiration, and made her and her son a sign for the nations. **92**Surely this your community is a single community, and I am your Lord, so serve Me.[d] **93**And they split apart their unity: to Us will all return.

Section 7: **The righteous will inherit the land**

94 So whoever does good deeds and is a believer, there is no rejection of his effort, and We surely write (it) down for him. **95**And it is forbidden to a town which We destroy: they shall not return.[e] **96**Even when Gog and Magog are let loose[f] and they sally forth from every elevated place.[g] **97**And the True Promise draws near,

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when a man imposes upon himself a heavy duty to please God. Jonah is here spoken of as being of the *ẓālimīn* (one of the sufferers of loss) in the sense of *making himself suffer a loss* by going away from his original place, or of having failed in doing justice to the message with which he was entrusted.

***a* (89)** That is, One Who will remain after all have perished.

***b* (90)** By *fitness* is meant fitness to bear a child, because she was thought to be barren.

***c* (91)** Mary, the mother of Jesus, is meant here. Nothing is said about immaculate conception here. The *guarding of chastity* does not preclude the lawful union of husband and wife.

***d* (92)** The basic principle of all religions taught by the prophets has been one and the same in all ages and all countries, that Allah is the Lord of all and He alone must be served. Therefore all prophets are here declared to be one community; they all led people to virtue through service to God. But, as the next verse shows, their followers broke off this unity.

***e* (95)** The verse reveals the great truth that those who are made to taste of death are not sent back into this world.

***f* (96-1)** The previous verse contains a prohibition against the return to life of those who are dead, or the rise of nations that are once destroyed. This one points out that even Gog and Magog, despite their predominance in the whole world, will follow the same law. The word *ḥattā* can mean *even* as well as *until.*

***g* (96-2)** For Gog and Magog, see 18:94 and footnote. The words *they sally forth from every elevated place* mean that they will take possession of every point of vantage and convenience, so as to dominate the whole world. See further 18:98 and footnote.

then the eyes of those who disbelieve will be fixedly open: O woe to us! Surely we were heedless of this; indeed, we were unjust.[a] **98**Surely you and what you worship besides Allah are fuel of hell; to it you will come.[b] **99**If these had been gods, they would not have come to it. And all will abide in it. **100**For them therein is groaning and in it they do not hear.[c]

101 Those for whom the good (end) has already gone forth from Us, they will be kept far off from it[d] — **102**they will not hear the faintest sound of it and they will abide in that which their souls desire.[e] **103**The great Terror will not grieve them, and the angels will meet them: This is your day which you were promised. **104**The day when We roll up heaven like the rolling up of the scroll of writings. As We began the first creation, We shall reproduce it. A promise (binding) on Us. We shall bring it about.[f]

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a **(97)** The *True Promise* that draws near with the domination of Gog and Magog is the promise of the ultimate triumph of Truth: "He it is Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions" (9:33). This is also referred to in 18:99, after speaking of the great conflict of Gog and Magog, in the words *then We shall gather them all together*. Thus the time when Gog and Magog overcome the whole world is also the time when Truth will gain ground and prevail over the whole earth. Materialism would first spread over the whole world, but would prove a failure. Then would spiritual Truth shine and people would feel that they had not only been heedless to it, but even unjust in trying to suppress it.

b **(98)** Compare 18:100: "And We shall bring forth hell, exposed to view, on that day before the disbelievers."

c **(100)** Those who turn a deaf ear to the Truth here shall be raised deaf in the life after death, and therefore they do not hear.

d **(101)** This verse totally refutes the false idea that even the righteous will first go to hell. They will not even hear its faintest sound, as the next verse states.

e **(102)** It is the bliss of communion with God which the souls of the righteous long for, so it is that bliss in which they shall live in the Hereafter.

f **(104)** The *rolling up of the heaven* like a written scroll means that the old order will be swept away altogether, just as when a writing is finished, it is rolled up. This no doubt happened in Arabia at the appearance of the Holy Prophet. But then follows the statement: *As We began the first creation, We shall reproduce it*. The sweeping away of the old order no doubt meant that a new order would be created. This is the *first creation* referred to here — the bringing about of a new order at the Prophet's appearance. And then we are told that the new order will be reproduced again. This reproduction is in reference to what has been earlier stated — that Gog and Magog will dominate the whole world. The spiritual resuscitation to which Islam gave rise would thus receive a setback by the

105 And certainly We wrote in the Book after the reminder that My righteous servants will inherit the land.[a] **106**Surely in this is a message for a people who serve (Us). **107**And We have not sent *y*ou but as a mercy to the nations.[b] **108**Say: It is only revealed to me that your God is one God: will you then submit? **109**But if they turn back, say: I have warned you in fairness, and I do not know whether what you are promised is near or far. **110**Surely He knows what is spoken openly and He knows what you hide. **111**And I do not know if this may be a trial for you and a provision till a time. **112**He said: My Lord, judge with truth. And our Lord is the Beneficent, Whose help is sought against what you ascribe (to Him).

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predominance of a material outlook of the world through the prevalence of Gog and Magog, but this setback, we are here told, would be only temporary, and a spiritual awakening like the first spiritual awakening would then be brought about in the whole world. This statement is followed by the words: *A Promise binding on Us*. The promise of the ultimate triumph of Truth in the whole world is of frequent occurrence in the Quran in earlier as well as in later revelation, and the temporary setback indicated here is also frequently mentioned, and on one occasion at least it is made fully clear that it will be a setback extending over a thousand years (32:5).

a **(105)** The Quran had repeatedly warned the disbelievers that Islam would be made triumphant in the land, and the righteous servants who were made to suffer persecution would one day be masters of the land. But as already noted, it is of the whole world that the Quran is speaking and we are here told that Truth will ultimately triumph in the whole world, which would thus be inherited by the righteous. This is made clear in v. 107.

b **(107)** While the words no doubt contain a reference to the merciful dealing with the Prophet's opponents, the real significance is that the Prophet's advent will prove a mercy not only to the Arabs by making them a foremost nation in the world, but to the whole of humanity. The Prophet's being a mercy to the nations of the world, is to show that ultimately all nations will be received into the Divine mercy which was manifested through him. Already the teachings of the Quran have not only benefited its followers, but even those who still reject its message, for, despite their rejection of it, they have accepted many of its principles.

Chapter 22

Al-Ḥajj The Pilgrimage

This chapter is called *The Pilgrimage* because the proclamation of pilgrimage, originally made by Abraham, was now repeated by the Holy Prophet Muhammad and addressed to the whole world. It opens with the prophecy of a terrible calamity, which is a preliminary to the triumph of truth. Then it asserts the certainty of Divine help for the believers and their consequent triumph. As their triumph would involve the conquest of Makkah, the chapter then deals with the topics of the Sacred House, the pilgrimage and sacrifice. The subject of fighting is then introduced, requiring sacrifices to be made. Then it tells us that, despite opposition, the faithful would be established in the land, but as Allah's dealing with the opponents is merciful their punishment would be withheld for a while. At the end it declares that polytheism would be uprooted. This chapter was revealed in the late period at Makkah.

Section 1: **The Judgment**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O people, keep your duty to your Lord; surely the shock of the Hour is a grievous thing.[a] **2**The day you see it, every woman giving suck will forget her suckling and every pregnant one will lay down her burden, and *y*ou will see people as drunken, yet they will not be drunken, but the punishment of Allah will be severe. **3**And some people dispute about Allah without knowledge, and follow every rebellious devil[b] — **4**for him it is written that whoever takes him for a friend, he will lead him astray and conduct him to the punishment of the burning Fire.

5 O people, if you are in doubt about the Resurrection,[c] then

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a **(1)** In the Quran, *al-sā'ah* or the *Hour* does not necessarily imply the day of Judgment. It often implies the time of judgment in this life, the time when the threatened doom overtakes a people, and this seems to be the significance here. Some consider that a severe shaking of the earth is meant as a sign of the approach of the great judgment, but even in that case it might imply any terrible calamity, such as a great war.

b **(3)** The devil here is, as frequently in the Quran, the devil in human form.

c **(5-1)** The word *ba'th* (raising, or as "resurrection" here) is used in three

surely We created you from dust,[a] then from a small life-germ, then from a clot, then from a lump of flesh, complete in make and incomplete, that We may make clear to you.[b] And We cause what We please to remain in the wombs till an appointed time, then We bring you forth as babies, then that you may attain your maturity. And some of you are caused to die, while some of you are brought back to the worst part of life,[c] knowing nothing after having knowledge. And *y*ou see the earth barren, but when We send down water upon it, it stirs and swells and brings forth a beautiful (growth) of every kind.[d] **6**That is because Allah, He is the Truth, and He gives life to the dead, and He is Powerful over all things, **7**and the Hour is coming, there is no doubt about it; and Allah will raise up those who are in the graves. [e]

8 And some people dispute about Allah without knowledge, and without guidance, and without an illuminating Book, **9**(such a person) turning away haughtily to lead (others) astray from the way of Allah. For him is disgrace in this world, and on the day of Resurrection We shall make him taste the punishment of burning. **10**This is for what *y*our two hands have sent ahead, and Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants.

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senses in the Quran: (1) the raising of the dead to life according to their good or evil deeds on the Judgment day; (2) the raising of the spiritually dead to life by the prophets; and (3) the raising up of prophets by Allah for the guidance of mankind. The word as used here may include the denial of all these three cases. The argument contained in this and the following verses is equally applicable to all, but it most prominently refers to the spiritual resurrection of the dead.

a **(5-2)** These words explain the meaning of Adam's or man's creation from dust, which is frequently referred to in the Quran, for all people are here spoken of as being created from dust. Man's creation from dust implies the ultimate springing of all life from earth.

b **(5-3)** The various stages through which every human child passes are spoken of here, showing how humble is his origin. Or, the reference may be to the various stages through which man has passed in his evolution to the present stage of perfection. Attention is thus drawn to the fact that, just as the physical evolution of man is gradual, so is his spiritual growth and development.

c **(5-4)** By *the worst part of life* is meant *dotage* and *decrepitude.*

d **(5-5)** The stirring and swelling of the earth means its stirring and swelling with the growth of herbage. Compare 41:39. The illustration draws attention to the fact that revelation quickens dead hearts as rain quickens dead earth.

e **(7)** Compare 35:22: "Surely Allah makes whom He pleases hear, and you cannot make those hear who are in the graves." The significance is that even the incorrigible will be raised to a spiritual life.

Section 2: **Certainty of Divine help**

11 And some people serve Allah, (standing) on the verge,[a] so if good befalls such a one he is satisfied with it, but if a trial afflicts him he turns back headlong. He loses this world and the Hereafter. That is a manifest loss. **12**He calls besides Allah on something which cannot harm him, nor benefit him; that is straying far. **13**He calls on him whose harm is nearer than his benefit. Certainly an evil guardian and an evil associate!

14 Surely Allah will make those who believe and do good deeds enter Gardens in which rivers flow. Allah indeed does what He pleases. **15**Whoever thinks that Allah will not assist him in this life and the Hereafter, let him raise (himself) by some means to the heaven, then let him cut (it) off, then let him see if his plan will take away what he is enraged at.[b] **16**And thus have We revealed it, clear arguments, and Allah guides whom He will. **17**Those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the Christians and the Magians and those who set up partners (with Allah) — surely Allah will decide between them on the day of Resurrection. Surely Allah is Witness over all things.[c]

18 Do *y*ou not see that to Allah makes submission whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in the earth, and the sun and the moon and the stars, and the mountains and the trees, and the animals and many of the people? And many there are to whom punishment is due. And he whom Allah disgraces, none can give him honour. Surely Allah does what He pleases.

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a **(11)** This expression indicates the attitude of a man who wavers, being ready to quit the faith on any pretence.

b **(15)** The prophecies of the final triumph of the Truth and of the coming of Divine assistance to the Holy Prophet were repeatedly declared in the Quran, and the disbelievers were enraged at this. They are told that the Divine assistance must come, and that they should leave no stone unturned in their struggle against it, insomuch that, if they could, they should rise to heaven and cut off all heavenly or Divine assistance from the Prophet. Or, the meaning may be that they may carry their anger to the greatest possible extreme and be driven to the utmost desperation, yet they will be unable to stop the coming of Divine help to the Prophet.

c **(17)** It is implied that differences in religious beliefs do not call for punishment in this life; these will be decided on the day of Judgment. Punishment in this life is brought upon those who work mischief and transgress all limits in doing evil.

19 These are two adversaries who dispute about their Lord. So those who disbelieve, for them are cut out garments of fire. Boiling water will be poured out over their heads. **20**With it will be melted what is in their bellies and (their) skins as well. **21**And for them are whips of iron. **22**Whenever they desire to go out from it, from grief,[a] they are turned back into it, and (it is said): Taste the punishment of burning.

Section 3: **Believers are triumphant**

23 Surely Allah will make those who believe and do good deeds enter Gardens in which rivers flow — they are adorned therein with bracelets of gold and (with) pearls. And their garments therein are of silk.[b] **24**And they are guided to pure words, and they are guided to the path of the Praised One. **25**Those who disbelieve and hinder (people) from Allah's way and from the Sacred Mosque, which We have made equally for all people, (for) the dweller in it and the visitor.[c] And whoever inclines to wrong in it, unjustly, We shall make him taste of painful punishment.

Section 4: **Pilgrimage**

26 And when We pointed to Abraham the place of the House, saying: Do not set up any partner with Me, and purify My House for those who make circuits and stand to pray and bow and prostrate themselves. **27**And proclaim to mankind the Pilgrimage:[d] they will

***a* (22)** *Min ghamm-in* ("from grief") explains *min-hā* ("from it"), and thus explains the nature of the punishment in this and the previous verse. It is a grief which will constantly burn their souls so as to melt them.

***b* (23)** The following incident, mentioned by Baihaqi, shows that the companions of the Prophet understood these prophecies in another sense too: "The bracelets of Kisra, the Persian monarch, were brought to Umar, and he made Surāqa ibn Mālik to wear them, on which he praised the Almighty." The reason for Umar making Surāqa wear the bracelets is also given by the same authority in another report, according to which the Holy Prophet had said to Surāqa: "How will you feel when you wear the bracelets of Kisra?"

***c* (25)** The two may respectively signify *the dweller in Makkah* and *the dweller in the desert*, or *one who dwells in it constantly* and *one who comes to it occasionally*. The disbelievers, being then in possession of the Sacred Mosque, prevented Muslims from using it. They are told that this state of things will be brought to an end, for it must be open to all visitors, and that could only be brought about by Muslims being made masters of it.

***d* (27-1)** The words are addressed to the Holy Prophet, and contain a mighty

come to *y*ou on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path,[a] **28**that they may witness benefits (provided) for them, and mention the name of Allah on appointed days over the cattle quadrupeds that He has given them; then eat of them and feed the distressed one, the needy.[b] **29**Then let them accomplish their needful acts of cleansing, and let them fulfil their vows and go round the Ancient House.[c]

30 That (shall be so). And whoever respects the sacred ordinances of Allah, it is good for him with his Lord. And the cattle are made lawful for you, except what is recited to you, so shun the filth of the idols and shun false words, **31**being upright for Allah, not setting up partners with Him. And whoever sets up partners with Allah, it is as if he had fallen from on high, then the birds had snatched him away, or the wind had carried him off to a distant place. **32**That (shall be so). And whoever respects the ordinances of Allah, this is surely from the piety of hearts. **33**In them are benefits for you for a term appointed, then their place of sacrifice is the Ancient House.

Section 5: **Sacrifices**

34 And for every nation We appointed acts of devotion that they might mention the name of Allah on the cattle quadrupeds that He has given them. So your God is One God, therefore to Him

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prophecy that Makkah will become the centre to which people will come for pilgrimage. It was announced just at the time when the Holy Prophet was being driven away from Makkah by his enemies. Just when Makkah seemed to have lost every chance of becoming a Muslim centre, and when Muslims themselves were in danger of being entirely destroyed, a mighty prophecy is announced in the most forcible words that Islam will spread to all countries of the world, and Makkah will become the universal centre to which pilgrims from all nations will come.

a **(27-2)** The *lean camel* is particularly mentioned here to indicate the great distances from which pilgrims would come. The addition of the words *from every remote path* shows that people will come from the remotest parts of the earth.

b **(28)** The subject of sacrifice is one that is specially related to the pilgrimage, because every pilgrim must sacrifice an animal. Thus it is the lesson of *sacrifice* that is taught in pilgrimage. The act of the pilgrim finds an echo throughout the Muslim world, for every Muslim who can afford is required to sacrifice an animal on this occasion, and this subject is discussed in the next section.

c **(29)** The mention of the Ka‘bah as the Ancient House, here and in v. 33, shows that it is so old that it came to be known throughout Arabia by that name, thus pointing to its very remote antiquity; see 2:125.

should you submit.[a] And give good news to the humble, [35]whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, and who are patient in their afflictions, and who keep up prayer, and spend (on good works) out of what We have given them.[b]

36 And the camels, We have made them from among the signs appointed by Allah for you [c] — in them there is much good for you. So mention the name of Allah on them standing in a row. Then when they fall down on their sides, eat of them and feed the contented one and the beggar.[d] Thus have We made them subservient to you that you may be grateful. [37]Not their flesh, nor their blood, reaches Allah, but to Him is acceptable the observance of duty on your part.[e] Thus has He made them subservient to you, that you may magnify Allah for guiding you aright. And give good news to those who do good (to others). [38]Surely Allah defends those

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a **(34)** The principle of sacrifice is one which is accepted in one form or another by all nations of the world; but it has a deeper meaning in Islam. The outward act is still there but it no more conveys the meaning attached to it in ancient religions, viz., that of appeasing an offended Deity, or that of serving as an atonement for sins. It signifies the sacrifice of the sacrificer himself, and becomes thus an outward symbol of his readiness to lay down his life, if required, and to sacrifice all his interests and desires in the cause of Truth. Hence it is that words introducing the subject of sacrifice are immediately followed by an injunction to submit oneself entirely to Allah, Who is the *one God*, i.e., the only Being Who deserves to be made the true object of one's love.

b **(35)** It is by the mention of Allah's name that an animal is sacrificed, and the meaning underlying it is that their own hearts should *tremble* at the mention of that name. Thus they should bear in mind, when sacrificing an animal over which they hold control, how much more necessary it is that they should lay down their lives in the way of Allah, Who holds control over all. Hence a verse speaking of sacrifices is immediately followed by one which requires the exercise of great patience and endurance under hard trials by the faithful.

c **(36-1)** The camels which are brought for sacrifice to Makkah by the pilgrims are here stated to be only outward signs of the true religion of Allah, that religion being no other than the religion of entire submission to Allah and of laying down all one has, even one's life, in the way of Allah.

d **(36-2)** The flesh of the animals sacrificed is not to be wasted, but it should serve as food for the poor and the needy.

e **(37)** It is not the outward act of sacrifice which is acceptable, but the deep meaning of *sacrifice* which underlies it. The idea of atonement is quite foreign to Islamic sacrifice. It is the righteous whom Islam requires to sacrifice, as hinted at in the words: *to Him is acceptable the observance of duty on your part*.

who believe. Surely Allah does not love anyone who is unfaithful, ungrateful.[a]

Section 6: **Believers permitted to fight**

39 Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed. And surely Allah is Able to assist them[b] — **40**Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And if Allah did not repel some people by others, surely cloisters and churches and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. And surely Allah will help him who helps Him. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.[c] **41**Those who, if We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer and give the due charity and enjoin good and forbid evil. And Allah's is the end of (all) affairs.

42 And if they reject *y*ou, already before them did the people of Noah and Ād and Thamūd reject (prophets), **43**and the people of

***a* (38)** A new subject is now introduced, the subject of fighting in the way of Allah. This sheds light upon the connection which exists between the two subjects. After dealing with the subject of sacrifice theoretically, the Muslim has in fact been prepared to bring into practice the theory of the sacrifice. Hence he is told that the time is near when he will be required to lay down his very life in the defence of Truth, which the opponents were striving to exterminate. Therefore, the subject of fighting in the cause of Truth is a fitting sequel to the subject of sacrifice, as casting further light upon the inner meaning of sacrifice, and also requiring that doctrine to be carried into practice.

***b* (39)** This is the earliest permission given to the Muslims to fight. The words in which the permission is granted show clearly that war was first made on the Muslims by their opponents; and secondly, that the Muslims had already suffered great oppression at the hands of their persecutors. The words of the next verse, *those who are driven from their homes*, may refer to the emigration to Abyssinia, or to the exodus to Madinah, which commenced soon afterwards.

***c* (40)** The religious freedom established by Islam has not yet been surpassed by the most civilized and tolerant of nations. It deserves to be noted that the lives of Muslims are to be sacrificed not only to stop their own persecution by their opponents and to save their own mosques, but to save churches, synagogues and cloisters as well — in fact, to establish perfect religious freedom. Mosques, though they are the places where the name of Allah is remembered most of all, are mentioned after churches and synagogues. Early Muslims closely followed these directions, and every commander of an army had express orders to respect all houses of worship, and even the cloisters of monks, along with their inmates.

Abraham and the people of Lot, **44**and the dwellers of Midian. And Moses (too) was rejected. But I gave respite to the disbelievers, then I seized them; so how (severe) was My disapproval! **45**How many a town We destroyed while it was unjust, so it is fallen down upon its roofs; and (how many) a deserted well and palace raised high! **46**Have they not travelled in the land so that they should have hearts with which to understand, or ears with which to hear? For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts.[a] **47**And they ask *y*ou to hasten on the punishment, and Allah by no means fails in His promise. And surely a day with *y*our Lord is like a thousand years as you count.[b] **48**And how many a town to which I gave respite while it was unjust, then I seized it! And to Me is the return.

Section 7: **Opposition to the Prophet**

49 Say: O people, I am only a plain warner to you. **50**So those who believe and do good, for them is forgiveness and an honourable sustenance. **51**And those who strive to oppose Our messages, they are the inmates of the flaming Fire.

52 And We never sent a messenger or a prophet before *y*ou but when he desired, the devil made a suggestion in regard to his desire; but Allah annuls what the devil casts, then does Allah establish His messages. And Allah is Knowing, Wise[c] — **53**that He may make what the devil casts a trial for those in whose hearts is a disease and

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a **(46)** The Quran very often speaks of the blind, the deaf and the dead, meaning thereby the spiritually blind, deaf and dead, as it has plainly stated here.

b **(47)** Those spoken of here are undoubtedly the opponents of Truth who were to come later, and who have been allowed to oppose the advance of Islam for a thousand years. The setback which Islam was to receive for a thousand years is again spoken of in 32:5.

c **(52)** A false story is mentioned in connection with this verse, according to which the Holy Prophet on one occasion recognized that the idols worshipped by the Arabs could intercede with God on their behalf. See 53:21 footnote. This story has been rejected by all sound and reliable commentators. The words of this verse do not, and cannot, mean that when a prophet recites a revelation, the devil introduces his own words into his recitation. What every prophet *desires* is the establishing of the Truth that is revealed to him, and it is with this desire of every prophet that the devil interferes, instigating people, *making suggestions to them*, as stated here, to oppose the Truth. That this is the true meaning is also shown by the context, which deals with the establishing of the Truth and the desire of the opponents of Truth to annihilate it.

the hard-hearted.[a] And surely the wrongdoers are in severe opposetion, [54]and that those who have been given knowledge may know that it is the Truth from your Lord, so they should believe in it that their hearts may be lowly before Him. And surely Allah is the Guide of those who believe, into a right path.

55 And those who disbelieve will not cease to be in doubt concerning it, until the Hour overtakes them suddenly, or the punishment of a destructive day comes to them. [56]The kingdom on that day is Allah's. He will judge between them. So those who believe and do good will be in Gardens of bliss. [57]And those who disbelieve and reject Our messages, for them is a humiliating punishment.

Section 8: **The faithful shall be established**

58 And those who flee in Allah's way and are then slain or die, Allah will certainly grant them a goodly sustenance.[b] And surely Allah is the Best of providers. [59]He will certainly make them enter a place which they are pleased with. And surely Allah is Knowing, Forbearing. [60]That (is so). And whoever retaliates with the like of what he is afflicted with, and he is oppressed, Allah will certainly help him. Surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving.[c] [61]That is because Allah makes the night to pass into the day and makes the day to pass into the night, and because Allah is Hearing, Seeing.[d] [62]That is because Allah is the Truth, and

***a* (53)** The devil's strivings against the Prophet become a trial for the weak, who are unable to endure the severe persecutions of their enemies.

***b* (58)** A flight of the faithful to Abyssinia had already taken place, and on the occasion of the flight to Madinah the Holy Prophet, with Abu Bakr and Ali, were the last men to depart from Makkah. A true and generous leader of men, he waited to see his faithful followers depart before he left, so that their safety might be ensured. If he had left his followers behind him, they would have encountered a very hard fate at the hands of an exasperated enemy. The reference to some being slain after their flight is clearly prophetical.

***c* (60)** This verse permits Muslims, who were long persecuted and oppressed, to punish their persecutors, but at the same time recommends pardon and forgiveness by referring to those two attributes of the Divine Being in the concluding words of the verse.

***d* (61)** Apparently the succession of the day and the night refers here to the turn of fortune hinted at in the previous verse, because an oppressed community

what they call upon besides Him — that is the falsehood; and because Allah — He is the High, the Great.

63 Do *y*ou not see that Allah sends down water from the cloud, then the earth becomes green? Surely Allah is Knower of subtleties, Aware. **64**To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And surely Allah — He is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised.

Section 9: **Divine mercy in dealing with people**

65 Do *y*ou not see that Allah has made subservient to you all that is in the earth, and the ships gliding in the sea by His command? And He withholds the heaven from falling on the earth except with His permission. Surely Allah is Compassionate, Merciful to mankind.[a] **66**And He it is Who brings you to life, then He causes you to die, then He will bring you to life. Surely man is ungrateful.

67 To every nation We appointed acts of devotion, which they observe,[b] so do not let them dispute with *y*ou in the matter, and call (them) to *y*our Lord. Surely *y*ou are on a right guidance. **68**And if they argue with *y*ou, say: Allah best knows what you do. **69**Allah will judge between you on the day of Resurrection in that in which you differ. **70**Do *y*ou not know that Allah knows what is in the heaven and the earth? Surely this is in a book. That is surely easy to Allah.

71 And they serve besides Allah that for which He has not sent any authority, and of which they have no knowledge. And for the unjust there is no helper. **72**And when Our clear messages are recited to them, *y*ou will notice a denial on the faces of those who disbelieve — they almost attack those who recite to them Our messages. Say: Shall I inform you of what is worse than this?

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could not punish its persecutors unless it gained mastery over them. The same is indicated in the two attributes of the Divine Being with which the verse is closed. The verses that follow contain hints to the same effect.

a **(65)** The first part of the verse gives a promise of victory to the Muslims, while the latter part warns the opponents that Allah withholds the punishment from them for a time, for He is Compassionate and Merciful to people. The withholding of the heaven means the withholding of the punishment, which the opponents were told would come down upon them from heaven.

b **(67)** The principle that all nations were given spiritual light is reiterated throughout the Quran.

The Fire. Allah has promised it to those who disbelieve. And evil is the destination.

Section 10: **Polytheism will be uprooted**

73 O people, a parable is set forth, so listen to it. Surely those whom you call upon besides Allah cannot create a fly, though they should all gather for it. And if the fly carry off anything from them, they cannot take it back from it. Weak are (both) the invoker and the invoked.[a] **74**They do not estimate Allah with His due estimation. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty. **75**Allah chooses messengers from angels and from mankind. Surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing. **76**He knows what is before them and what is behind them. And to Allah are all affairs returned.

77 O you who believe, bow down and prostrate yourselves and serve your Lord, and do good that you may succeed. **78**And strive hard for Allah with due striving. He has chosen you and has not laid upon you any hardship in religion — the faith of your father Abraham. He named you Muslims before and in this,[b] that the Messenger may be a bearer of witness to you, and you may be bearers of witness to the people;[c] so keep up prayer and give the due charity and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector; excellent the Protector and excellent the Helper!

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a **(73)** The verse, while truly describing the inability of false gods to create the lowest form of life or to exercise the least control over creation, contains a clear prophecy that the false deities will be removed from the Sacred House, and that both the worshippers and the worshipped will be helpless.

b **(78-1)** The reference in *before* is to the revelation of Abraham, who prayed that from among his descendants there should arise a nation of Muslims (2:128), and in *this* to the Quran. The root-word of *Islām* and *Muslim* is *salm* or *silm,* both signifying peace, and a Muslim is therefore one who leads a life of peace, *peace with God*, which means complete submission to His will, and *peace with man*, which means that he causes no injury to any person, as a saying of the Holy Prophet has it (Bukhari, 2:4, hadith 10).

c **(78-2)** Compare 2:143, where similar words are used. The significance is that the Muslim community is destined to play the role of leader to the whole of humanity.

Chapter 23

Al-Mu'minūn The Believers

This chapter is so named because it deals with the success of the *Believers*. Continuing the subject-matter of the last chapter, it first asserts the success of the believers and then refers to similar success in case of the former prophets, whose history, it tells us, will be repeated in the Holy Prophet's case. It ends with a condemnation of polytheism by its own votaries and shows how the wicked will finally regret their evil deeds. This chapter was revealed in the late period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Success of the faithful**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Successful indeed are the believers, **2**who are humble in their prayers, **3**and who shun what is vain, **4**and who act for the sake of purity,[a] **5**and who restrain their sexual passions[b] — **6**except in the presence of their spouses or those whom their right hands possess, for such surely are not to be blamed,[c] **7**but whoever seeks to go beyond that, these are the transgressors — **8**and those who are faithful to their trusts and their covenant, **9**and those who keep a guard on their prayers. **10**These are the heirs, **11**who inherit Paradise. In it they will abide.

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a **(4)** The words *li-l-zakāt* mean *for the sake of purity* or *to attain purity*. The word *zakāt* means originally *purity*, as in 19:13, while *zakāt* in the sense of due charity is spoken of as being *paid* or *given.*

b **(5)** The expression used here is, literally, *guard their private parts,* and means *the restraining of sexual passions.*

c **(6)** The words *mā malakat aimānu-hum*, literally, "those whom their right hands possess", usually indicate *slaves*. It should be noted that this chapter was revealed at Makkah, and the conditions under which slave-girls could be taken as wives were given later at Madinah; see 4:25. If the reference here is to sexual relations, the permission regarding those *whom their right hands possess* must be read subject to the conditions of 4:25. It may, however, be added that the expression used in v. 5 means in a wider sense the *covering of parts of the body which it is indecent to expose*, and in this connection it must be borne in mind that, according to Islamic rules of decency, the exposure of such parts of the body, as are generally exposed at evening entertainment venues, is disallowed, but a certain degree of freedom is allowed to women in the presence of their husbands and female servants and to men in the presence of their wives and male servants.

12 And certainly We create man of an extract of clay,[a] **13**then We make him a small life-germ in a firm resting-place, **14**then We make the life-germ a clot, then We make the clot a lump of flesh, then We make (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothe the bones with flesh, then We cause it to grow into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators![b] **15**Then after that you certainly die. **16**Then on the day of Resurrection you will surely be raised up.

17 And indeed We have made above you seven ways — and never are We heedless of creation.[c] **18**And We send down water from the cloud according to a measure, then We cause it to settle in the earth, and We are indeed Able to carry it away. **19**Then with it We cause to grow gardens of palm-trees and grapes for you. You have therein many fruits, of which you eat; **20**and a tree that grows out of Mount Sinai, which produces oil and relish for the eaters.[d] **21**And surely there is a lesson for you in the cattle. We make you to drink of what is in their bellies, and you have in them many advantages and of them you eat, **22**and on them and on the ships you are borne.

***a* (12)** The creation of man is here traced back to earth, for the life-germ in sperma is an extract of food, which is drawn from earth in whatever form it may be. While the first eleven verses speak of the spiritual growth of man, his physical growth is here spoken of, and thus a comparison may be established between the physical and the spiritual growth. Though described in the past tense, it is a general law of the creation of man that is spoken of here. The addition of the words, *then We cause it to grow into another creation* (v. 14), is to show that man's creation does not end with the completion of the different stages of physical growth, as in the case of other animals, but he is endowed with certain other faculties — the reference being to the moral and spiritual side of man's growth.

***b* (14)** The several stages in the growth of the human child, as given here, and unknown then, are quite in accordance with scientific investigation. It should be borne in mind that the word *fa*, meaning *then*, as used in *then We clothe the bones*... does not always imply order. This is clear from the context, which states that there is first a lump of flesh, and the nucleus of the bones is generated in this flesh.

***c* (17)** Instead of the *seven heavens*, here we have the *seven ways*, which may be the orbits of the seven members of the solar system, excluding the earth, as shown by the words *above you*.

***d* (20)** In the tree that grows out of Mount Sinai, and which produces oil, there seems to be reference to the *blessed olive tree* of 24:35, as representing the Muslim nation.

Section 2: **Noah**

23 And certainly We sent Noah to his people, so he said: My people, serve Allah, you have no God other than Him. Will you not guard against evil? **24**But the chiefs of those who disbelieved from among his people said: He is only a mortal like you, who desires to have superiority over you. And if Allah had pleased, He could have sent down angels. We have not heard of this among our forefathers. **25**He is only a madman, so bear with him for a time.

26 He said: My Lord, help me against their calling me a liar. **27**So We revealed to him: Make the ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation; then when Our command comes, and water gushes forth from the valley, take into it two of all things, a pair,[a] and *y*our own people, except those among them against whom the word has gone forth, and do not speak to Me in respect of those who are unjust; surely they will be drowned. **28**Then when *y*ou are firmly seated, *y*ou and those with *y*ou, in the ark, say: Praise be to Allah, Who delivered us from the unjust people! **29**And say: My Lord, cause me to land a blessed landing and You are the Best of those who bring to land.

30 Surely there are signs in this, and surely We are ever trying (people). **31**Then We raised after them another generation. **32**So We sent among them a messenger from among them, saying: Serve Allah — you have no God other than Him. Will you not guard against evil?

Section 3: **Prophets after Noah**

33 And the chiefs of his people who disbelieved and called the meeting of the Hereafter a lie, and whom We had given plenty to enjoy in this world's life, said: He is only a mortal like you, eating what you eat and drinking what you drink.[b] **34**And if you obey a

a **(27)** See 11:40, 11:42.

b **(33)** The prophets are rejected because they are subject to the same laws of nature in their human requirements as other people. And no one can be a model for humans, who is not himself a human being, and who is not subject to the same laws of nature, for only a human being can show people how they can avoid falling a prey to the frailties of human nature. Hence, a Divine incarnation, or God in a human body, cannot serve as a model to human beings. We want a mortal to

mortal like yourselves, then surely you are losers. [35]Does he promise you that, when you are dead and become dust and bones, you will then be brought forth? [36]Far, very far, is what you are promised: [37]There is nothing but our life in this world, we die and we live and we shall not be raised again; [38]he is only a man who has forged a lie about Allah, and we are not going to believe in him.

39 He said: My Lord, help me against their calling me a liar. [40]He said: In a little while they will certainly be repenting. [41]So the punishment overtook them in justice, and We made them as rubbish; so away with the unjust people!

42 Then We raised after them other generations. [43]No people can hasten on their doom, nor postpone it. [44]Then We sent Our messengers one after another. Whenever its messenger came to a people, they called him a liar, so We made them follow one another and We made them stories. So away with a people who do not believe![a]

45 Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron with Our messages and a clear authority [46]to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they behaved haughtily and they were an insolent people. [47]So they said: Shall we believe in two mortals like ourselves while their people serve us? [48]So they rejected them and became of those who were destroyed. [49]And certainly We gave Moses the Book that they might go aright. [50]And We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign, and We gave them refuge on a lofty ground having meadows and springs.[b]

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show us how to avoid the pitfalls with which we, as mortals, are surrounded; if God Himself comes into the world, He cannot serve this purpose.

a **(44)** The significance of making them stories is that the stories of their evil fate were the only remembrance of them left when they perished.

b **(50)** This description of the land applies exactly to the valley of Kashmir, and part of the lost ten tribes of Israel is traced to Kashmir, where a large number of places bear the names of places in Palestine. There is also a tomb known as the tomb of *Nabī* (i.e., the prophet), or *ʻĪsā* (i.e., Jesus), or a man by the name of *Yūz Āsaf,* in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. The fact that the chapter deals with the final triumph of prophets and their deliverance from the hands of their enemies also gives us a clue to the mystery attending the circumstances of the disappearance of Jesus after the event of the Cross; for, as shown in 4:157 footnote, Jesus did not die on the cross. This verse indicates that, being delivered from the hands of his enemies, he was given shelter at some other place which, from its description here and other evidence, seems to be Kashmir. Traditions about *Yūz Āsaf*

Section 4: **Higher values of life**

51 O messengers, eat of the good things and do good. Surely I am Knower of what you do. [52]And surely this your community is one community, and I am your Lord, so keep your duty to Me. [53]But they split apart their unity into sects, each faction rejoicing in what it had. [54]So leave them in their ignorance till a time. [55]Do they think that by the wealth and children with which We aid them, [56]We are hastening to them good things? Rather, they do not perceive.

57 Surely they who live in awe for fear of their Lord, [58]and those who believe in the messages of their Lord, [59]and those who set up no partner with their Lord, [60]and those who give what they give while their hearts are full of fear that to their Lord they must return — [61]these hasten to good things and they are foremost in attaining them.

62 And We do not impose on any soul a duty beyond its ability, and with Us is a book which speaks the truth, and they are not wronged. [63]But their hearts are in ignorance about it, and they have besides this other deeds which they do. [64]Until, when We seize those who lead easy lives among them with punishment, then they cry for help. [65]Do not cry for help this day. Surely you will not be helped by Us. [66]My messages were indeed recited to you, but you used to turn back on your heels [67]haughtily, passing nights in talking nonsense about it. [68]Do they not then ponder the Word? Or has there come to them something which did not come to their fathers of old? [69]Or do they not recognize their Messenger, that they deny him? [70]Or say they: There is madness in him? But he has brought them the Truth, and most of them hate the Truth. [71]And if the Truth follow their desires, the heavens and the earth and all those who are in them would perish. Indeed, We have brought them their reminder, but they turn away from their reminder. [72]Or do *y*ou ask of them a recompense? But the recompense of *y*our Lord is best, and He is the Best of providers. [73]And surely *y*ou call them to a right way.

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lead us to identify him with Jesus, and to conclude that Jesus went to Kashmir after the event of the crucifixion, and that he preached, lived, died and was buried there. (*Editor's Note:* Since this footnote was written, much research has been published supporting this theory. For details, Khwaja Nazir Ahmad's work, *Jesus in Heaven on Earth,* first published in 1952, as well as a number of later publications, some of them by Western authors, should be consulted.)

74 And surely those who do not believe in the Hereafter are deviating from the way. **75**And if We show mercy to them and remove the distress they have, they would persist in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on. **76**And already We seized them with punishment, but they were not submissive to their Lord, nor did they humble themselves.[a] **77**Until, when We open for them a door of severe punishment, then they are in despair at it.[b]

Section 5: **Polytheism is self-condemned**

78 And He it is Who made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts. Little thanks you give! **79**And He it is Who multiplied you in the earth, and to Him you will be gathered. **80**And He it is Who gives life and causes death, and His is the alternation of the night and the day. Do you not then understand? **81**But they say the like of what the ancients said. **82**They say: When we die and become dust and bones, shall we then be raised up? **83**We are indeed promised this, and (so were) our fathers before. This is nothing but stories of the ancients!

84 Say: Whose is the earth, and whoever is in it, if you know? **85**They will say: Allah's. Say: Will you not then be mindful? **86**Say: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the mighty Throne of power? **87**They will say: (This is) Allah's. Say: Will you not then guard against evil? **88**Say: Who is it in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things and He protects, and none is protected against Him, if you know? **89**They will say: (This is) Allah's. Say: From what are you then deceived? **90**Indeed, We have brought them the Truth and surely they are liars. **91**Allah has not taken to Himself a son, nor is there with Him any (other) god — in that case would each god have taken away what he created, and some of them would have overpowered others. Glory be to Allah above what they describe — **92**the Knower of the unseen and the seen; so may He be exalted above what they set up as partners (with Him)!

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a **(76)** The punishment referred to in this verse, and the distress, the removal of which is mentioned in the previous verse, probably refer to the famine which overtook the people of Makkah.

b **(77)** They do not take a warning from the milder punishment, so a severer punishment must follow. This overtook them in the form of battles, leading to their ultimate defeat. But the promise relates to the future as well.

Section 6: **Regrets of the wicked**

93 Say: My Lord, if You show me what they are promised — **94**my Lord, then do not place me with the unjust people. **95**And surely We are well Able to show *y*ou what We promise them.[a] **96**Repel evil with what is best.[b] We know better what they describe. **97**And say: My Lord, I seek refuge in You from the evil suggestions of the devils,[c] **98**and I seek refuge in You, my Lord, should they come to me. **99**Until when death catches up with one of them, he says: My Lord, send me back,[d] **100**that I may do good in that which I have left. By no means! It is only a word that he speaks. And before them is a barrier, until the day they are raised.[e]

101 So when the trumpet is blown, there will be no ties of relationship among them that day, nor will they ask of one another. **102**Then those whose good deeds are heavy, those are the successful.

***a* (95)** The promise given to the Holy Prophet in these verses is that the power of his persecutors will be broken in his lifetime.

***b* (96)** The doing of good in return for evil is the common teaching of all prophets. But nowhere is the principle put in such a beautiful and practical form as in the Quran. To return good for evil is only possible under certain circumstances, and the Gospel doctrine — that ye resist not evil — has not been found practicable. The Quran, however, says, *repel evil with what is best*. If you can repel an evil by doing good for it, it is the course recommended; but if punishment is necessary, that would be the better course. It is the only workable principle of life.

***c* (97)** The evil suggestions of the devils were really suggestions of the wicked, who were opposed to the progress of Islam, and the Prophet is here told to look upon Allah as his only support. *To seek refuge in the Lord* is the height of goodness. Nowhere has a man a better refuge than in the Source of all strength, and no mortal can aspire to a higher honour than having his refuge in the Lord. The command to the Prophet to say this is really an image of the aspiration of his soul. His soul rested in that highest degree of security from all evil suggestions, which is termed *refuge in the Lord*.

***d* (99)** These words make it quite certain that the devils of the two previous verses are no other than the wicked opponents of the Holy Prophet.

***e* (100)** That the dead do not return to life is a principle which is reaffirmed here; see also 21:95. According to the Quran there are three states of a man's life, viz., his life in this world, his life in *barzakh* (referred to as "barrier" here) and the great manifestation of all spiritual realities that will take place on the day of Resurrection. *Barzakh* is the intermediate state in which the soul lives after death till the Resurrection. Here it is stated that no one who has passed into the state of *barzakh* is allowed to go back into the previous state. See further 39:42.

103 And those whose good deeds are light, those are they who have lost their souls, abiding in hell. **104**The Fire will scorch their faces, and in it they will be in severe affliction. **105**Were not My messages recited to you, but you used to reject them? **106**They will say: Our Lord, our misfortune overcame us, and we were a people in error. **107**Our Lord, take us out of it; then if we return (to evil), we shall be unjust. **108**He will say: Go away into it, and do not speak to Me. **109**Surely there was a group of My servants who said: Our Lord, we believe, so forgive us and have mercy on us, and You are the Best of those who show mercy. **110**But you ridiculed them, until they made you forget remembrance of Me, and you used to laugh at them.[a] **111**Surely I have rewarded them this day because they were patient, that they are the achievers.

112 He will say: How many years did you remain in the earth? **113**They will say: We remained a day or part of a day, but ask those who keep account. **114**He will say: You remained only a little — if only you knew! **115**Do you then think that We have created you in vain, and that you will not be returned to Us?[b] **116**So exalted be Allah, the True King! No God is there but He, the Lord of the Throne of Grace. **117**And whoever invokes, besides Allah, another god — he has no proof of this — his reckoning is only with his Lord. Surely the disbelievers will not be successful. **118**And say: My Lord, forgive and have mercy, and You are the Best of those who show mercy.

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a **(110)** It was not really the believers who caused them to forget the remembrance of their Lord but, on account of their mocking the believers, the disbelievers forgot their Lord; hence the believers are here spoken of as though they caused the disbelievers to forget their Lord.

b **(115)** This verse establishes the doctrine of the responsibility of human actions. Man is not created *in vain*, but he will be returned to his Lord to meet the consequences of what he does in this life.

Chapter 24

Al-Nūr The Light

In verse 35 of this chapter, Islam is shown to be the most perfect manifestation of Divine *Light* to illumine both East and West, and hence the name of the chapter. As this light was to first illumine the houses in which Muslims live (v. 36), this chapter deals with the purity of home life. It begins by condemning illicit sexual relations and slander against women, and then it prescribes measures to prevent sexual immorality. It goes on to deal with the kindling of Divine light in Muslim hearts and the establishment of the kingdom of Islam. It ends by teaching respect for each other's privacy and for the Holy Prophet's orders as these relate to the welfare of the community. This chapter was revealed at Madinah, largely about 5 A.H.

Section 1: **Law relating to adultery**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 (This is) a chapter We have revealed and made obligatory and in which We have revealed clear messages that you may be mindful. **2**The adulteress and the adulterer, flog each of them (with) a hundred strokes,[a] and do not let pity for them detain you from

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***a* (2)** Chastity, as a virtue, is not given the first place in modern civilized society. The breach of the greatest trust which can be imposed in a man or a woman, the breach which ruins families, destroys household peace, and deprives innocent children of their loving mothers, is not looked upon even as seriously as the breach of trust of a small sum of money. Hence the Islamic law seems to be too severe to the West.

The punishment for adultery is here stated to be flogging, *not stoning to death*, which was really prescribed by the Jewish law. The cases of stoning to death for adultery by the Prophet's orders relate actually to a Jew and a Jewess in one case (Bukhari, 23:60, hadith 1329), and others apparently occurred before the revelation of this chapter. That stoning to death was never contemplated by Islam as a punishment for adultery is made clear by 4:25, where it is stated expressly that the punishment for adultery in the case of slave-girls, when they are married, is *half the punishment which is inflicted on free married women*, and stoning to death could not be halved. Besides, the Quran nowhere speaks of stoning as a punishment for adultery. Flogging was aimed more at disgracing the culprit than at torturing him. In the time of the Prophet, and even for some time after him, there was no whip, and flogging was carried out by beating with a stick or with

obedience to Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day, and let a group of believers witness their punishment. [3]The adulterer cannot have sexual relations with any but an adulteress or an idolatress, and the adulteress, none can have sexual relations with her but an adulterer or an idolater; and it is forbidden to believers.[a]

4 And those who accuse free women and do not bring four witnesses, flog them (with) eighty strokes and never accept their evidence, and these are the transgressors[b] — [5]except those who afterwards repent and act aright; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

6 And those who accuse their wives and have no witnesses except themselves,[c] let one of them testify four times, bearing Allah to witness, that he speaks the truth, [7]and the fifth time (he shall swear) that the curse of Allah be on him, if he is lying. [8]And it shall avert the punishment from her, if she testify four times, bearing Allah to witness, that he is lying, [9]and the fifth time (she shall swear) that the wrath of Allah be on her, if he speaks the truth.[d] [10]And if it were not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy — and that Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Wise!

Section 2: **Slanderers of Aishah**

11 Surely they who concocted the lie are a group from among you.[e] Do not consider it an evil to you; rather, it is good for you.

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the hand or with shoes. The culprit was not stripped naked, but he was required to take off thick clothes.

a **(3)** The idolater or the idolatress is mentioned along with the adulterer or the adulteress on account of the low standard of morality among the idolaters.

b **(4)** This is an effectual restraint against slander and gossip, which so often bring disaster upon the heads of innocent women. Unless there is the clearest evidence of adultery against a woman, the slanderer is himself to be punished.

c **(6)** The ordinance relates to the case of husbands who accuse their wives of adultery and have no evidence (see a case in Bukhari, 68:30, hadith 5309). In such a case divorce is effected, the husband not being punishable for the accusation, though he cannot produce witnesses, and the wife not being punishable for adultery, if she denies the charge in the manner stated. The same procedure would be adopted in a reverse case.

d **(9)** *Editor's Note:* In this procedure, the testimony of the husband and of the wife are treated as of equal value and weight.

e **(11-1)** The incident referred to here took place when the Prophet, accompanied by his wife Aishah, was returning from an expedition in 5 A.H.

For every one of them is the sin he has earned; and as for him among them who took upon himself the main part of it,[a] he shall have a grievous punishment. **12**Why did not the believing men and the believing women, when you heard it, think well of their own people, and say: This is an evident falsehood. [b] **13**Why did they not bring four witnesses of it? So, as they have not brought witnesses, they are liars in the sight of Allah.[c] **14**And if it were not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy in this world and the Hereafter, a grievous punishment would certainly have touched you for the talk you indulged in.

15 When you received it on your tongues and spoke with your mouths what you had no knowledge of, and you considered it trivial, while with Allah it was serious. **16**And why did you not, when you heard it, say: It is not worthy of us to talk of it. Glory be to You! This is a great slander. **17**Allah instructs you never to return to anything like it again, if you are believers. **18**And Allah makes clear to you the messages; and Allah is Knowing, Wise. **19**Those who love that scandal should circulate with regard to those who believe, for them is a grievous punishment in this world and

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Aishah had gone out on a private occasion, but, when she returned, she realized that she had lost her necklace, and went back to search for it. In her absence the attendants, supposing her to be in her *howdah*, started while it was yet dark. When she returned, finding the camel and the men gone, she sat down there and was brought to Madinah by a man who was in the rear of the party. Some mischievous persons from among the hypocrites spread false reports, slandering her, and some of the Muslims also associated themselves with the slander. Aishah's innocence was at length established by this revelation (Bukhari, 52:15, hadith 2661). Those who had taken part in the accusation were punished, according to one hadith (Ibn Majah, 20:15, hadith 2567).

It may be added here that the tongue of gossip has never spared even the most virtuous women. Another case of a virtuous woman being thus defamed is that of Mary, the mother of Jesus, about whom the Jews talked similar slander. The words — *do not consider it an evil to you; rather, it is good for you* — aim to bring solace to such aggrieved people.

a **(11-2)** He who took the main part of it upon himself is said to be Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the chief of the hypocrites (Bukhari, 64:34, hadith 4141), because he concocted the lie and circulated the false report.

b **(12)** There was not a *single witness*, nor any circumstance that could lend colour to the false story.

c **(13)** While the Quran takes a very serious view of crimes against chastity, it also makes criminal the circulation of false reports affecting a woman's chastity. Thus even a lighter accusation in connection with the misconduct of women required the evidence of four witnesses; see 4:15.

the Hereafter. And Allah knows, while you do not know. **20**And if it were not for Allah's grace on you and His mercy[a] — and that Allah is Compassionate, Merciful.

Section 3: **Slanderers of women**

21 O you who believe, do not follow the footsteps of the devil. And whoever follows the footsteps of the devil, surely he commands indecency and evil. And if it were not for Allah's grace on you and His mercy, not one of you would ever have been pure, but Allah purifies whom He pleases.[b] And Allah is Hearing, Knowing. **22**And the possessors of grace and abundance among you should not swear against giving to the near of kin and the poor and those who have fled in Allah's way; and pardon and overlook. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[c]

23 Surely those who accuse chaste believing women, unaware (of the evil), are cursed in this world and the Hereafter, and for them is a grievous punishment,[d] **24**on the day when their tongues and their hands and their feet bear witness against them as to what they did.[e]

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a **(20)** The same words in the next verse are followed by the statement, *not one of you would ever have been pure*.

b **(21)** This passage shows that the companions of the Holy Prophet were purified from sins by Allah's grace.

c **(22)** This verse was revealed in connection with the action of Abu Bakr, Aishah's father, who had sworn not to allow maintenance to one of his relatives named Mistah, who had taken part in spreading the false reports against Aishah. After inflicting the legal punishment on the culprits, the Prophet was required to bear them no ill-will and to hide no rancour in his heart even towards the slanderers of his wife. Revelation even required his companions to be kind and forgiving to them. Abu Bakr is spoken of here as *one possessing grace and abundance* (Bukhari, 65: *Surah* 24, ch. 11, h. 4757), the former of these words referring to his moral and spiritual superiority and the latter to abundance in wealth. (*Editor's Note:* Upon hearing this revelation, Abu Bakr exclaimed: "I certainly love that Allah should forgive me", and then he resumed providing assistance to Mistah. This verse shows also that it is entirely baseless and false to assert that Islam prescribes the death penalty for those who commit "blasphemy" against its sacred personalities.)

d **(23)** This refers to those who continue to spread evil reports concerning chaste women, the gossip-mongers in every society.

e **(24)** The evidence of the members of the body is sometimes witnessed in this very life against the doers of evil, in the consequences of the evil done. On the

25On that day Allah will pay back to them in full their just reward, and they will know that Allah, He is the Evident Truth. **26**Unclean things are for unclean ones and unclean ones are for unclean things, and good things are for good ones and good ones are for good things; these are free from what they say. For them is forgiveness and an honourable sustenance.[a]

Section 4: **Preventive measures**

27 O you who believe, do not enter houses other than your own houses, until you have asked permission and greeted their inhabitants. This is better for you that you may be mindful.[b] **28**But if you find no one therein, do not enter them, until permission is given to you; and if it is said to you, Go back, then go back; this is purer for you. And Allah is Knower of what you do. **29**It is no sin for you to enter uninhabited houses in which you have your provisions. And Allah knows what you do openly and what you hide.

30 Say to the believing men that they lower their gaze and restrain their sexual passions. That is purer for them. Surely Allah is Aware of what they do.[c] **31**And say to the believing women that they lower their gaze and restrain their sexual passions and do not

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day of Resurrection the consequences of the evil deeds will assume a palpable form, as is also indicated in the paying back in full of the just rewards in the next verse, and thus bear witness to the evil done. This highly developed idea of the Resurrection did not exist before the Quran.

a **(26)** The meaning of this whole passage is made clear by the concluding words, i.e., nothing impure can be attributed to the pure ones, and they are free from what the impure ones say.

b **(27)** The law revealed in this verse lays down the basis of domestic peace and security needed for an advanced society. It is also a preventive measure against slander. (*Editor's Note:* This verse also supports the principle of having laws to safeguard the privacy of the individual within the home *vis-à-vis* the powers of the state authorities.)

c **(30)** Men are told to lower their gaze, just as women are enjoined to do in the next verse. This injunction is given as a preventive against the evil of illicit sexual relations. The Quran does not only forbid an evil, but also points out the way, by walking in which a person may be able to avoid it. Both men and women are required to keep their eyes cast down, so that when they meet each other, neither should men stare at women nor women at men. In a society in which women never appeared in public, the injunction to men to lower their gaze would be meaningless; and the similar injunction to women given in the next verse, if they never left the compounds of their houses, would be absurd.

display their adornment except what appears of it.[a] And they should wear their head-coverings over their bosoms.[b] And they should not display their adornment except to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or those whom their right hands possess, or harmless male servants,[c] or the children who do not know women's nakedness. And they should not strike their feet so that the adornment that they hide may be known. And turn to Allah all, O believers, so that you may be successful.

32 And marry off those among you who are single (to spouses), and those who are fit among your male slaves and your female slaves. If they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out

***a* (31-1)** To guard the relations between males and females and to check a too free intermingling of men and women, the Quran requires women in particular not to display their adornment. But there is a clear exception here — *except what appears of it* or *except that which it is customary and natural to uncover*. What is prohibited is really the *display* of beauty, as elsewhere expressly indicated: "And do not display (your beauty) like the displaying of the earlier (days of) ignorance" (33:33). According to Ibn Jarir, the exception mentioned relates to *the face and hands*. As an argument corroborating this opinion he says that, when praying, the woman is not required to keep her face and hands covered — hands up to the elbow — while she is required to cover the rest of the body. According to Hadith, the Holy Prophet himself is reported to have told Asma, his wife Aishah's sister, when she appeared before him in thin clothes, through which parts of her body could be seen: "Asma, when a woman attains her puberty it is not proper that any part of her body should be seen except this," and he pointed to his face and hands (Abu Dawud, 34:33, hadith 4104). This settles conclusively that Islam never enjoined the veil or covering of the face.

***b* (31-2)** Before Islam women used to appear in public with their breasts partly uncovered. The *khimār* (pl. *khumr*) means a *head-covering*, and women were thus required to cover their breasts with a part of their head-covering.

***c* (31-3)** By *their women* are indicated all women who come in contact with them, or women who are on the same social level with them. *Those whom their right hands possess* include male and female slaves. Next to them are mentioned servants (called here as *tābi'īn* or 'followers' because they follow the master), to which is added a qualifying phrase meaning, literally, *not having need* (*of women*) or lacking in cunning. These words mean male servants who take up service only as a means of living and not with the mischievous intention of getting intimacy in the house. It should be noted that women are nowhere forbidden to employ male servants or to appear before them. What this verse prevents is only display of female beauty except to those most nearly related to women, and this is a preventive measure against the spread of loose ideas of morality, and a step to help restraint of sexual passions, which is all that the Quran aims at.

of His grace. And Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.[a] **33**And those who cannot find a match must keep chaste, until Allah makes them free from want out of His grace.[b] And those of your slaves who ask for a contract (to buy their freedom), give them the contract, if you know any good in them, and give them something out of the wealth of Allah which He has given you.[c] And do not compel your slave-girls to prostitution when they desire to keep chaste, in order to seek the frail goods of this world's life. And whoever compels them, then surely after their compulsion Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **34**And certainly We have sent to you clear messages and a description of those who passed away before you, and advice for those who guard against evil.

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a **(32)** The Quran looks upon the married state as the normal state, and hence it enjoins that, so far as is possible, those who are single should be married. It also requires both male and female slaves to be kept in a state of marriage. The keeping of concubines is clearly inconsistent with this. Islam is against celibacy, and considers parenthood to be the duty of every human being. The Holy Prophet, too, laid stress on Muslim men and women living in a married state. Thus he said: "He who is able to marry should marry, for it keeps the gaze low and guards chastity; and he who cannot should take to fasting (occasionally), for it will have a castrating effect on him" (Bukhari, 30:10, hadith 1905). On another occasion he said, addressing some young men who talked of fasting in the daytime and keeping awake for prayer during the night, and keeping away from marriage: "I keep fast and I break it, and I pray and I sleep, and I am married, so whoever inclines to any other way than my *sunnah,* he is not of me" (Bukhari, 67:1, hadith 5063).

b **(33-1)** The words translated as *those who cannot find a match* may also mean *those who cannot find the means to marry*. Marriage thus becomes an obligatory institution in Islam, only those being excused who cannot find a match or who lack the means to marry. Marriage, in fact, affords the surest guarantee for the betterment of the moral tone of society.

c **(33-2)** The word *kitāb*, or *writing*, as used here, stands for a contract between a slave and his master for the former to purchase his freedom. Though the practice of the master making such a contract with the slave prevailed before the advent of Islam, the important reform introduced by Islam was that, when a slave desired such a contract to be made, the master could not refuse it. Twelve centuries before any attempt was made by any individual or community to legislate for the liberty of slaves, a dweller in the Arabian desert had laid down this noble institution, that, if a slave asked for a writing of freedom, he was not only to be given that writing by the master, but he was also to be provided with money to purchase his freedom, the only condition being *if you know any good in them*, i.e., if he is fit for work and able to earn his livelihood. And, in addition, the duty was imposed upon the State of spending a part of the collection of the obligatory charity (*zakāt*) for this object, as stated in 9:60.

Section 5: **Manifestation of Divine light**

35 Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. A likeness of His light is as a pillar on which is a lamp — the lamp is in a glass, the glass is as it were a brightly shining star — lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil gives light, even though fire does not touch it — light upon light.[a] Allah guides to His light whom He pleases. And Allah sets forth parables for mankind, and Allah is Knower of all things — **36**(that light is) in houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted and His name to be remembered within them.[b] Therein do glorify Him, in the mornings and the evenings, **37**men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of the due charity — they fear a day in which

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a **(35)** Allah is called here the *light of the heavens and the earth* because He has manifested hidden things and brought them into existence. *Mi<u>sh</u>kāt* means a *niche*, but it also has the meaning of *pillar*. In this parable, Islam is represented as a likeness of the Divine light, a light placed high on a pillar so as to illuminate the whole world; a light guarded by being placed in a glass, so that no puff of wind can put it out; a light so resplendent that the glass itself in which it is placed is as a brilliant star. It should be noted that the religion of Islam is repeatedly spoken of as *Divine light* in the Quran: "They desire to put out *the light of Allah* with their mouths, but Allah will allow nothing except the perfection of *His light*, though the disbelievers are averse" (9:32, 61:8). Hence it is of Islam that the parable of Divine light speaks. The *blessed olive*, from which that light is lit, and which stands here for a symbol of Islam, as the fig stands for a symbol of Judaism (see 95:3), belongs neither to the East nor to the West. Even so is Islam, which must give light to both the East and the West, and which, therefore, does not specially belong to either of them. The reference seems to be to the welding together of the East and the West in Islam, a prophecy which is now approaching its fulfilment in the awakening of the West to the truth of the principles of Islam.

The parable becomes clearer if *light* is taken to refer to the Holy Prophet. The Prophet was by nature gifted with the highest qualifications. Even before he received Divine revelation, his life was a life of purity and devoted to the service of humanity. Light emanated from him even before the light from on High came to him in the form of Divine revelation, so that when revelation came to him it was *light upon light*.

b **(36)** The Divine light spoken of in the last verse is here stated as being met with in certain houses, the distinctive mark of those houses being that the name of Allah is remembered in them, thus showing that these houses are the houses of Muslims, and the light is therefore the light of Islam. These houses, we are further told, though humble now, will be *exalted*. And the exaltation of the humble huts of the Arab dwellers of the desert to royal palaces is a fact of history.

the hearts and the eyes will turn about,[a] **38**that Allah may give them the best reward for what they did, and give them more out of His grace. And Allah provides without measure for whom He pleases.

39 And those who disbelieve, their deeds are as a mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man thinks to be water, until, when he comes to it, he finds it to be nothing, and he finds Allah with him, so He pays him his due. And Allah is Swift at reckoning — **40**or like darkness in the deep sea — a wave covers him, above which is another wave, above which is a cloud — (layers of) darkness one above another. When he holds out his hand, he is almost unable to see it. And to whom Allah does not give light, he has no light.[b]

Section 6: **Manifestation of Divine power**

41 Do *y*ou not see that Allah is He Whom do glorify all those who are in the heavens and the earth, and the birds with wings outspread? Each one knows its prayer and its glorification. And Allah is Knower of what they do. **42**And Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and to Allah is the eventual coming. **43**Do *y*ou not see that Allah drives along the clouds, then gathers them together, then piles them up, so that *y*ou see the rain coming forth from their midst? And He sends down from the heaven (clouds like) mountains, in which is hail, afflicting with it whom He pleases and turning it away from whom He pleases. The flash of His lightning almost takes away the sight. **44**Allah causes the night and the day to succeed one another. Surely there is a lesson in this for those who have sight. **45**And Allah has created every animal of water.[c]

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a **(37)** In these houses Allah is glorified in the morning and the evening, and therefore these can be the houses of no other than Muslims, because the keeping up of prayer and the giving of the due charity is the distinguishing characteristic of Islam. The opposition to His light, and the end of that opposition, are described in v. 39–40. The turning about of the hearts and the eyes means either that they will be transformed in the new life or that they will be in a state of commotion by reason of fear. The verse that follows lends support to the first meaning.

b **(40)** As the first part of the section gives a picture of the brilliant and dazzling Divine light given to the believers, the last part describes the utter darkness of doubt and ignorance in which the disbelievers are. Their apparent hopes of success are compared with a mirage, and, when they are undeceived of these, they will find themselves in the presence of God and will have their dues paid to them.

c **(45-1)** Here only animals are spoken of as having been created from water, but in 21:30 we are told that all life, whether animal or plant, has been created from water.

So among them is that which crawls on its belly, and among them is that which walks on two feet, and among them is that which walks on four.[a] Allah creates what He pleases. Surely Allah is Powerful over all things.

46 We have indeed revealed clear messages. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the right way. **47**And they say: We believe in Allah and in the Messenger and we obey; then some of them turn away after this, and they are not believers. **48**And when they are invited to Allah and His Messenger that he may judge between them, then some of them turn aside. **49**And if the right is on their side, they hasten to him in submission. **50**Is there in their hearts a disease, or are they in doubt, or do they fear that Allah and His Messenger will deal with them unjustly? But they themselves are the wrongdoers.

Section 7: **Establishment of the Kingdom of Islam**

51 The response of the believers, when they are invited to Allah and His Messenger that he may judge between them, is only that they say: We hear and we obey. And these it is that are successful. **52**And he who obeys Allah and His Messenger, and fears Allah and keeps duty to Him, these it is that are the achievers. **53**And they swear by Allah with their strongest oaths that, if *y*ou command them, they would certainly go forth. Say: Do not swear (oaths); reasonable obedience (is desired). Surely Allah is Aware of what you do. **54**Say: Obey Allah and obey the Messenger. But if you turn away, he is responsible for the duty imposed on him, and you are responsible for the duty imposed on you. And if you obey him, you go aright. And the duty of the Messenger is only to deliver the message clearly.

55 Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will surely make them rulers in the earth as He made those

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a **(45-2)** The various kinds of animal life are here divided into three classes: (1) The creeping things, the lowest and the first form in the development of animal life. (2) Those walking upon two legs, such as birds, the second form of the development of animal life. Man, though walking on two legs, is not included in them, because human life is the highest form of the development of animal life, and it is generally mentioned as quite distinct from all animal life. (3) Those which walk on four legs, and to this class belong most of the mammals.

before them rulers, and that He will surely establish for them their religion, which He has chosen for them, and that He will surely give them security in exchange after their fear. They will serve Me, not setting up any partner with Me. And whoever is ungrateful after this, they are the transgressors.[a] **56**And keep up prayer and give the due charity and obey the Messenger, so that mercy may be shown to you. **57**Do not think that those who disbelieve will weaken (the Truth) in the earth; and their abode is the Fire. And it is indeed an evil destination!

Section 8: **Respect for privacy**

58 O you who believe, let those whom your right hands possess and those of you who have not attained to puberty ask permission of you three times: Before the morning prayer, and when you put off your clothes for the heat of noon, and after the prayer of night. These are three times of privacy for you; besides

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a **(55)** This verse not only prophesies the establishment of the kingdom of Islam, but also its permanence, so that successors will be raised to the Holy Prophet and the Muslims made a ruling nation on earth. By *those before them* are meant in particular *the followers of Moses.* Islam at the time of the revelation of these verses was still surrounded by enemies on all sides; there was still fear for the believers, as the verse clearly shows, and idol-worship still had the upper hand in Arabia. The triumph of Islam, which is prophesied in the parable of the *Divine Light* first, and the gradual advent of which is referred to afterwards, is here predicted in the clearest and most emphatic terms: the believers will be made rulers in the earth; their religion will be firmly established; security will be given to them in place of fear; Divine Unity will rule supreme. All these favours will be bestowed upon the Muslims, for which they should be thankful; but, if they are ungrateful after that, they shall be dealt with as transgressors. The word *kafara,* to be "ungrateful", also means *to disbelieve,* and would mean here a denial in practice, or disobedience to Divine commandments.

There is also a reference here to the Divine promise to raise reformers (sing. *mujaddid*) among the Muslims, as prophets were raised among the Israelites. Such is the clear promise contained in a saying of the Holy Prophet: "Surely Allah will raise up for this people (i.e., the Muslims) in the beginning of every century one who will revive for it its religion" (Abu Dawud, 39:1, hadith 4291). The promise given in the verse may therefore refer not only to the temporal successors of the Holy Prophet, but also to his spiritual successors or reformers. The analogy of the Israelites, to which the verse refers, points to the appearance of a Messiah among the Muslims as a Messiah was raised among the Israelites, and it was on this verse that the claim of the late Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, was based. He claimed to be a reformer (*mujaddid*) for the fourteenth century of the *Hijra* and the Messiah whose advent among the Muslims was foretold.

these it is no sin for you nor for them, (that) you go round about each other. Thus does Allah make clear to you the messages. And Allah is Knowing, Wise.[a] **59** And when the children among you attain to puberty, they should seek permission as those before them sought permission. Thus does Allah make clear to you His messages. And Allah is Knowing, Wise.

60 And (as for) women past childbearing,[b] who do not hope for marriage, it is no sin for them if they put off their (outer) clothes without displaying their adornment. And if they are modest, it is better for them. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

61 There is no blame on the blind man, nor any blame on the lame, nor blame on the sick,[c] nor on yourselves that you eat in your own houses, or your fathers' houses, or your mothers' houses, or your brothers' houses, or your sisters' houses, or your paternal uncles' houses, or your paternal aunts' houses, or your maternal uncles' houses, or your maternal aunts' houses, or (houses) of which you possess the keys, or your friends' (houses). It is no sin in you that you eat together or separately. So when you enter houses, greet your people with a salutation from Allah, blessed (and) goodly. Thus does Allah make clear to you the messages that you may understand.

Section 9: **Matters of State to take precedence**

62 Only those are believers who believe in Allah and His Messenger, and when they are with him on an important matter, they do not go away until they have asked permission from him.

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a **(58)** Rules relating to personal and family privacy are of the utmost importance in the betterment of social relations, and their non-observance leads to all kinds of false reports, which scandal-mongers are always ready to lay hold upon, thereby creating dissensions in society.

b **(60)** The word used signifies a *woman who has ceased to bear children and to have the menstrual discharge*. The reference in putting off *clothes* is to the over-garment spoken of in 33:59.

c **(61)** The Arabs had their scruples in eating with the blind, etc., in which respect they were like the Jews and some other people, including Hindus. Islam lays down a middle rule, and allows the individual a great latitude in this respect. A man may eat alone or with others, he may eat with the maimed, etc., or he may eat in the houses of near relations and friends. The latter part of the verse shows that a certain degree of familiarity with near relatives is recommended, so that one can take food with them, even though he may not have been invited specially.

Surely they who ask permission from *y*ou, they are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger; so when they ask permission from *y*ou for some affair of theirs, give permission to whom *y*ou will from among them, and ask forgiveness for them from Allah. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

63 Do not make the Messenger's calling among you as your calling of one another.[a] Allah indeed knows those who steal away from among you, concealing themselves. So those who go against his order should beware that a trial may afflict them or there may befall them a painful punishment.

64 Now surely Allah's is whatever is in the heavens and the earth. He knows indeed your condition. And on the day when they are returned to Him, He will inform them of what they did. And Allah is Knower of all things.

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a **(63)** It does not mean how the Prophet is to be addressed, but in what manner his call is to be responded to. The context makes it clear. The previous verse states that none is to leave without the Prophet's permission, when they are gathered together for some important matter requiring their presence, and the words that follow this passage are to the same effect. What is stated here is that the Prophet's call to the believers is to be respected, and not to be treated as their calling of one another; because the Prophet's call relates to some important affair affecting the welfare of the community, while their mutual calling of one another relates to their own private affairs.

Chapter 25

Al-Furqān The Criterion

The name of this chapter, *Al-Furqān,* meaning criterion, distinction or discrimination, is one of the names of the Holy Quran because of the distinction it brings about between truth and falsehood. It deals with the great transformation which the Quran brought about in the lives of those who accepted it. At the outset it declares that the Holy Prophet's message is for all nations of the world. It goes on to assert the truth of the warning conveyed by the Holy Prophet and prophesies that a discrimination will be finally made between good and evil. It then draws lessons from the fate of previous peoples as well as from phenomena in nature. It ends with a description of the righteous, showing the transformation in people that the Quran was to effect. This chapter was revealed entirely at Makkah, most probably in the last period.

Section 1: **A Warner for all nations**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Blessed is He Who sent down the Criterion upon His servant that he might be a warner to the nations [a] — **2**He, Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and Who did not take to Himself a son, and Who has no partner in the kingdom, and Who created everything, then ordained for it a measure.[b] **3**And they take besides Him gods who create nothing, while they are themselves created, and they control for themselves no harm nor benefit, and they do not control death, nor life, nor raising to life.

4 And those who disbelieve say: This is nothing but a lie, which he has forged, and other people have helped him at it. So indeed they have brought an injustice and a falsehood. **5**And they say:

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a **(1)** As this chapter deals with the mighty transformation which the Quran had brought about in the lives of the people, it is mentioned here by the name *Furqān* (criterion for distinguishing or discriminating between truth and falsehood). The words "he might be a warner to the nations" show that the transformation which was being brought about in Arabia would ultimately extend over the whole world and all nations would benefit.

b **(2)** Verses 2 and 3 speak of the different kinds of polytheistic beliefs prevailing in the world, which were all destined to be swept away by the doctrine of Divine Unity as preached by Islam.

Stories of the ancients, which he has got written, so they are read out to him morning and evening![a] **6**Say: He has revealed it, Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth.[b] Surely He is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

7 And they say: What a Messenger is this? He eats food and goes about in the markets. Why has not an angel been sent down to him to be a warner with him?[c] **8**Or a treasure given to him, or a garden from which to eat?[d] And the evildoers say: You follow only a man bewitched! **9**See what parables they set forth for *y*ou — they have gone astray, so they cannot find a way.[e]

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a **(5)** In the previous verse, their allegation is that the Quran is a forgery; here they allege that the Prophet had caused some stories of the ancients to be written down by some people who helped him and it was these stories which were recited to him and which he gave out as a revelation from on High. How could mere stories bring about the transformation which the Quran was working in the hearts of people? Attention to this is drawn in the next verse.

b **(6)** The secrets of the heavens and the earth which are known to God alone include the secrets of human nature. Transformation in people's lives has always been brought about by means of Divine revelation, and mortal efforts have ever failed in changing the hearts of people.

c **(7)** The Holy Prophet's life was one of the utmost simplicity. He did all his work himself. He aided his wives in their household duties, mended his clothes, tied up the goats, and even cobbled his sandals. In fact, his kind and genial nature often led him to do others' work. Once a woman, unable to work for herself, asked him to lead her into a certain street; he accompanied her there, only taking leave when her work was accomplished. He was a mortal, and partook of the ordinary food of a simple Arab. Hence they speak of him as *eating food*. The answer to this is given in v. 20, viz., that all prophets were mortal and subject to human laws, as was the Holy Prophet.

d **(8)** Their idea of a messenger of God was that he should be rolling in wealth. In fact, wealth was all in all to them and they paid no consideration to the moral, the higher, values of life for which the Prophet came. They were at the same time told that, though the Muslims had to suffer privations, they would be rewarded for their sacrifices in this very life. Treasures were placed at the feet of the companions of the Holy Prophet, and they were given gardens. But all this happened in accordance with Divine law, which requires the fulfilment of prophecy to be brought about gradually, even as it requires all growth to be gradual in the physical world.

e **(9)** Elsewhere, the disbelievers are quoted as saying: "Why was not this Quran revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?" (43:31). Nothing except rank or wealth had any importance in their eyes. Their very conception of the real values of life was wrong, so they could not find a way.

Section 2: **Truth of the warning**

10 Blessed is He Who, if He please, will give *y*ou what is better than this: Gardens in which rivers flow. And He will give *y*ou palaces.[a] **11**But they deny the Hour, and We have prepared a burning Fire for him who denies the Hour. **12**When it sees them from a far-off place, they will hear its raging and roaring.**13**And when they are cast into a narrow place in it, in chains, they will there pray for destruction. **14**Do not pray this day for destruction once but pray for destruction again and again. **15**Say: Is this better or the Garden of Perpetuity, which the dutiful are promised? That is a reward and a destination for them. **16**They shall have in it what they desire, to abide. It is a promise to be prayed for from *y*our Lord.[b]

17 And on the day when He will gather them, and what they serve besides Allah, He will say: Was it you who led astray these My servants, or did they themselves stray from the path? **18**They will say: Glory be to You! It was not befitting for us to take for protectors others besides You, but You made them and their fathers to enjoy until they forgot the Reminder, and they became a lost people.[c] **19**So they will call you liars in what you say, then you can neither avert (punishment), nor (obtain) help. And whoever among you does wrong, We shall make him taste a great punishment.

20 And We did not send before *y*ou any messengers but they surely ate food and went about in the markets. And We make some of you a trial for others. Will you bear patiently? And *y*our Lord is ever Seeing.[d]

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a **(10)** These words contain a clear prophecy that the Prophet and his followers will receive the good things of this life too. The gardens of Mesopotamia, the palaces of Persia and of the Caesars, were given to the companions of the Holy Prophet.

b **(16)** The Garden is promised to the faithful but they should pray to their Lord for its bestowal, because prayer to God is the means by which it can be attained.

c **(18)** The words *it was not befitting for us to take for protectors others besides You* show that those who worshipped God alone could not ask their followers to worship others than God. The reference is clearly to Jesus Christ.

d **(20)** This is an injunction to the Muslims to bear the persecutions of their opponents patiently, for these trials will distinguish the bad from the good. The concluding words are a solace to them: *your Lord is ever Seeing* — He will punish the oppressors.

Section 3: **The Day of Discrimination**

Part 19

21 And those who do not look for meeting with Us, say: Why have not angels been sent down to us, or (why) do we not see our Lord? Indeed they are too proud of themselves and revolt in great revolt.[a] **22**On the day when they will see the angels, there will be no good news for the guilty, and they will say: Let there be a strong barrier![b] **23**And We shall turn to the work they have done, so We shall render it as scattered dust.[c]

24 The owners of the Garden will on that day be in a better abiding-place and a fairer resting-place. **25**And on the day when the heaven bursts apart with clouds, and the angels are sent down, as they are sent.[d] **26**The kingdom on that day rightly belongs to the Beneficent, and it will be a hard day for the disbelievers. **27**And on the day when the wrongdoer will bite his hands, saying: If only I had taken a way with the Messenger![e] **28**O woe is me! If only I had not taken such a one for a friend! **29**Certainly he led me astray from the Reminder after it had come to me. And the devil ever deserts man.

30 And the Messenger will say: My Lord, surely my people treat this Quran as a forsaken thing. **31**And thus have We made for every prophet an enemy from among the guilty, and sufficient is *y*our Lord as a Guide and a Helper. **32**And those who disbelieve say:

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a **(21)** The coming of the angels and the Lord signifies the coming of the threatened punishment, and the next verse makes it clear; see 2:210.

b **(22)** The words "strong barrier" bear different interpretations according to whether they are taken to be spoken by the angels or by the guilty. In the former case, the meaning is that good news will be a forbidden thing to the guilty, which is equivalent to saying that they will be punished. In the latter case, the words are a kind of prayer for the coming of a barrier between them and their punishment.

c **(23)** All the exertions of the Quraish were brought to naught in the Battle of Badr, and all attempts to uproot Truth are dealt with similarly.

d **(25)** This description of the day of Badr is also given in 8:11–12, where the falling of rain is clearly mentioned, and on the same occasion is also mentioned the coming of the angels. The next verse shows that it will be a day of victory for the Muslims, the believers in the Beneficent, and a hard day for the disbelievers. In fact, the distress and hardship the Quraish experienced in the Battle of Badr were not tasted by them in any of their subsequent encounters with the Muslims.

e **(27)** Commentators have here mentioned the names of some people who fought with the Prophet at Badr. But the statement is general and the evildoer often regrets the evil he did, when he suffers the consequences of the evil done.

Why has not the Quran been revealed to him all at once? It is so that We may strengthen *y*our heart with it and We have arranged it well in arranging.[a] **33**And they cannot bring *y*ou a question, but We have brought *y*ou the truth and the best explanation.[b] **34**Those who will be gathered to hell on their faces — they are in an evil plight and straying farther away from the path.

Section 4: **A lesson in the fate of former people**

35 And certainly We gave Moses the Book and We appointed with him his brother Aaron, an aider. **36**Then We said: Go, both of you, to the people who reject Our messages. So We destroyed them with utter destruction. **37**And the people of Noah, when they rejected the messengers, We drowned them, and made them a sign for people. And We have prepared a painful punishment for the wrongdoers — **38**and Ād and Thamūd and the dwellers of Rass and many generations in between.[c] **39**And to each We gave examples and each did We destroy with utter destruction.[d] **40**And indeed they pass by the town on which was rained an evil rain.[e] Do they not see it? But they hope not to be raised again.

41 And when they see *y*ou, they take *y*ou only for a jest: Is this he whom Allah has raised to be a messenger? **42**He had almost led us astray from our gods, if we had not adhered to them patiently!

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a **(32)** The Quran was revealed piecemeal so that, under the varying circumstances through which the Prophet passed, the Divine revelation might be a source of strength to his heart; and then, as it were, to refute any suggestion that the revelation might remain a disorderly collection of fragments revealed under different circumstances, it is added that the entire arrangement was also Divinely accomplished. The arrangement of the Quran, according to this verse, was a part of the Divine scheme, brought about in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet.

b **(33)** This verse lays down the basis of an important principle, namely, that the Quran not only contains answers to all objections against it, but also adduces arguments of the truth of the assertions made. No other religious book of the world satisfies this requirement, which circumstance alone places the Quran above all scriptures, and points to it as a unique revelation capable of satisfying the spiritual requirements of all people in all times.

c **(38)** According to some, Rass was a country in which a part of the tribe of Thamūd resided; others say that Rass is the name of a town in Yamāmah.

d **(39)** The meaning is that every one of these generations was warned of its doom by citing examples of those who had previously perished, but, not heeding the warning, was destroyed.

e **(40)** This town is Sodom, which was situated on the way to Syria.

And they will know, when they see the punishment, who is more astray from the path. **43**Have *y*ou seen him who takes his low desire for his god?[a] Will *y*ou be a guardian over him? **44**Or do *y*ou think that most of them hear or understand? They are only as the cattle; rather, they are farther astray from the path.

Section 5: **A lesson from Nature**

45 Do *y*ou not see how *y*our Lord extends the shade? And if He pleased, He would have made it stationary. Then We have made the sun an indication of it, **46**then We take it to Ourselves, taking little by little.[b] **47**And He it is Who made the night a covering for you, and sleep a rest, and He made the day to rise up again. **48**And He it is Who sends the winds as good news before His mercy; and We send down pure water from the clouds, **49**that We may give life with it to a dead land, and give it for drink to cattle and many people that We have created.[c] **50**And certainly We repeat this to them that they may be mindful, but most people only consent to denying.

51 And if We pleased, We could raise a warner in every town.[d]

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a **(43)** This verse shows how broad is the idea of *shirk* or *polytheism* according to the Quran. It is not simply worship of idols that is condemned, but blindly following one's desires is equally condemned. Many people who consider themselves the servants of the One God really bow in submission before the greatest of their idols, i.e., their desire. The monotheistic doctrine has here been brought to a perfection not to be met with elsewhere.

b **(46)** This and the previous verse show that Allah deals mercifully with His servants. He would not destroy them all at once. The sun of righteousness had risen, and there were clear indications that the shadows of darkness would disappear, but, as in physical nature, they would not disappear suddenly, but gradually, diminishing little by little.

c **(49)** The mercy of Allah, which appears in the form of rain in physical nature, comes spiritually in the form of revelation. As the pure water from the clouds gives life to a dead land, so does the pure water of revelation from Him raise the spiritually dead to life.

d **(51)** The companions of the Holy Prophet no doubt had this in mind when they spread far and wide, taking his message and warning to every distant town. It should, however, be noted that the verse does not contradict the statement in 35:24, and elsewhere, that a prophet was raised among every nation. The chapter opens with the statement that the Prophet was a warner to all nations. The statement made here shows that, if God had pleased, He would have raised a warner in every town, but the oneness of humanity, which was a grand object following

52So do not obey the disbelievers, and strive against them a mighty striving with it.[a]

53 And He it is Who has made the two seas to flow freely, the one sweet, very sweet, and the other saltish, bitter. And between the two He has made a barrier and inviolable obstruction.[b] **54**And He it is Who has created man from water, then He has made for him blood-relationship and marriage-relationship.[c] And *y*our Lord is ever Powerful.

55 And they serve besides Allah that which can neither benefit them, nor harm them. And the disbeliever is ever an aider against his Lord.[d] **56**And We have not sent *y*ou but as a giver of good news and as a warner. **57**Say: I ask of you no reward for it except that whoever wishes may take a way to his Lord. **58**And rely on the Ever-Living Who does not die, and celebrate His praise. And sufficient

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upon the Oneness of God, could not have thus been brought about. Hence the verse that follows requires a hard striving on the part of the Prophet and his followers for this grand achievement.

***a* (52)** This verse affords a clear proof of the significance of the word *jihād*, as used in the Quran. Every exertion to spread the Truth is, according to this verse, a *jihād*; in fact, it is called the *jihād kabīr* ("mighty striving") or the *great jihād*. *Fighting in defence of religion* received the name of *jihād*, because under the circumstances it became necessary for the Truth to live and prosper; if fighting had not been permitted, Truth would surely have been uprooted. The commentators all accept this significance of the word here. It should be noted that the greatest *jihād* which a Muslim can carry on is one by means of the Quran, to which the personal pronoun *it* at the end of the verse unquestionably refers, because such *jihād* must be carried on by every Muslim under all circumstances.

***b* (53)** Apparently the reference is to the sweet-water rivers flowing on earth or underground and to the saltish sea-water. But there is a deeper reference to the two lives which man leads on earth, a sweet life of faith and goodness, which brings satisfaction and peace to the mind, and a bitter life of faithlessness and wickedness, which ever increases the thirst for material gains and never brings satisfaction to the mind of man. Both existed in the world side by side, and so they would continue.

***c* (54)** The passage seems to hint at the flight to Madinah. The Prophet was related to the Makkans through his father, and to the Madinans through his mother. As his blood-relations had persecuted him and were bent upon killing him, he is now reminded of his relationship through marriage to another people. It was no doubt due to some such hint in the Divine revelation that the Prophet was searching, on the occasion of the pilgrimage, for adherents among the people of Madinah.

***d* (55)** The disbeliever aided the cause of untruth, as against his Lord, while the Prophet aimed at establishing the Truth in the world.

is He as being Aware of His servants' sins, **59**Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six periods, and He is established on the Throne of Power, the Beneficent. So ask respecting Him one aware.[a] **60**And when it is said to them: Be submissive to the Beneficent, they say: And what is the Beneficent? Shall we be submissive to what *y*ou order us? And it adds to their aversion.

Section 6: **The transformation brought about**

61 Blessed is He Who made the stars in the heavens and made therein a sun and a moon giving light! **62**And He it is Who made the night and the day to follow each other, for him who desires to be mindful or desires to be thankful.[b]

63 And the servants of the Beneficent are they who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, Peace![c] **64**And they who pass the night prostrating themselves before their Lord and standing. **65**And they who say: Our Lord,

***a* (59)** The one aware is the Prophet, who possessed true knowledge of God.

***b* (62)** The night is here spoken of as being the more opportune time for being mindful, i.e., for prayers, and the day for being thankful, i.e., for work and livelihood.

***c* (63)** From here to the end of the chapter is described the great transformation which the Prophet had already brought about. The great qualities spoken of as being met with in the servants of the Beneficent present a striking contrast with the evils which reigned supreme in Arabia. They were an arrogant people, who trampled the rights of their fellow-beings under their feet, but the faithful now walked in humility and led lives of lowliness, in which they had the greatest regard for others' rights (v. 63). In the days of ignorance they passed their nights in drunken orgies, but now they kept awake at night in devotion and were instead drunk with the love of God (v. 64). In the days of ignorance they spent money extravagantly, when it was a question of pride, and they did not care for the poor dying of hunger, but now they spent every penny they could on others (v. 67). Formerly idols were worshipped in Arabia, human blood was shed on the slightest pretext, sex-relations were loose to an extreme, but they had now become the torch-bearers of Divine Unity, for whose sake they willingly suffered every privation, homicide was looked upon with abhorrence, the highest value was placed on the chastity of men and women, and righteousness was the one thing in which men and women vied with one another (v. 68–71). Truth and faithfulness were the great qualities that ruled people's minds, in the new dispensation, and a life full of vigour and earnestness was seen in the place of ignorance, superstition and immorality, which were the chief features of pre-Islamic Arabia (v. 72–74).

avert from us the punishment of hell; surely its punishment is a lasting evil: **66**It is surely an evil abode and resting-place! **67**And they who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, and the just mean is ever between these. **68**And they who do not call upon another god with Allah, nor slay the soul which Allah has forbidden, except in the cause of justice, nor commit fornication; and he who does this shall meet a penalty of sin — **69**the punishment will be doubled to him on the day of Resurrection, and he will abide in it in humiliation — **70**except him who repents and believes and does good deeds; for such Allah changes their evil deeds to good ones.[a] And Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. **71**And whoever repents and does good, he surely turns to Allah a (goodly) turning.

72 And they who witness no falsehood, and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly.[b] **73**And they who, when reminded of the messages of their Lord, do not fall down at them deaf and blind. **74**And they who say, Our Lord, grant us in our wives and our offspring the joy of our eyes, and make us leaders for those who guard against evil. **75**These are rewarded with high places because they are patient, and are met there with greetings and salutation,[c] **76**abiding there — a goodly abode and resting-place! **77**Say: My Lord would not care for you, if it were not for your prayer. Now indeed you have rejected, so the punishment will come.[d]

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a **(70)** Here we are plainly told that the transformation had already been wrought; the vices in which the people indulged formerly had been changed to good and righteous deeds, and those who found pleasure in evil deeds now found pleasure in the doing of good. It was the soul-force of the Prophet that had wrought this miraculous transformation.

b **(72)** They not only shunned falsehood but were now above everything that was vain or futile.

c **(75)** Apparently they were being expelled from their homes but they felt as if they were being rewarded with high places, because their outlook on life was now spiritual and not material. In addition to the greetings and salutations of the angels they were promised greetings and salutations in their new centre of activity, Madinah, to which they were fleeing, because there a similar brotherhood of the righteous was now ready to receive these emigrants.

d **(77)** The Truth had finally been rejected by the Makkans, so the disgrace and abasement which was promised for the opponents of Truth was now awaiting them. The righteous were finally separated from the wicked, so the punishment must come.

Chapter 26

Al-Shu'arā' The Poets

The title of this chapter is taken from a reference to *poets* in v. 224, where the allegation is refuted that the Quran is the work of a poet. It opens by consoling the Holy Prophet that he need not be anxious because of the rejection of his message by the people or despair of their reform. Then the histories of several prophets are narrated, presenting the fate of their opponents as a warning to the Holy Prophet's opponents, and finally the subject reverts to their objections against him. This chapter, and the two following it, belong to the middle period at Makkah.

Section 1: **The Prophet is consoled**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Benignant, Hearing, Knowing God.[a] **2**These are the verses of the Book that makes manifest.[b] **3**Perhaps *y*ou will kill *y*ourself with grief because they do not believe.[c] **4**If We please, We could send down on them a sign from heaven, so that their necks would bend before it.[d] **5**And no new Reminder from the Beneficent comes to

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a **(1)** This verse consists of the letters *ṭā, sīn* and *mīm,* which may stand for the names of God: *Laṭīf*, meaning *Benignant*, *Samī'*, meaning *Hearing*, and *'Alīm*, meaning *Knowing*. I may, however, suggest another interpretation. These chapters speak in particular of the calling of Moses at Mount Sinai, so *ṭā sīn* may stand for *Ṭūr Sīna'*, or *Mount Sinai*, and *mīm* may stand for Moses; attention is thus called in these letters to the *revelation granted to Moses at Mount Sinai*, which bears testimony to the truth of the Prophet. This is corroborated by the plain statement made in the last chapter of this group, that the disbelievers called the revelations of Moses and Muhammad two enchantments backing up each other (28:48).

b **(2)** The Quran *makes manifest all that is needed* for a right development of the human faculties, and it also makes manifest the whole truth.

c **(3)** The Prophet was informed by Divine revelation of the doom of an evil generation, but instead of cursing it, he exerted himself heroically to save his people by bringing about a mighty transformation among them, a transformation for which he was so anxious that he is described here as almost killing himself with grief.

d **(4)** Such a sign was sent in the Battle of Badr and again in the conquest

them but they turn away from it. [6]They indeed reject, so the news will soon come to them of that at which they mock.[a] [7]Do they not see the earth, how many of every noble kind We cause to grow in it? [8]Surely in this is a sign, yet most of them do not believe. [9]And surely *y*our Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.[b]

Section 2: **Moses is called and sent to Pharaoh**

10 And when *y*our Lord called Moses, saying: Go to the wrong-doing people — [11]the people of Pharaoh. Will they not guard against evil? [12]He said: My Lord, I fear that they will reject me. [13]And my heart is anxious, and my tongue is not eloquent, so send for Aaron (too). [14]And they have a crime against me, so I fear that they will kill me.[c] [15]He said: By no means; so go both of you with Our signs; surely We are with you, Hearing. [16]Then come to Pharaoh, and say: We are bearers of a message of the Lord of the worlds: [17]Send with us the Children of Israel.

18 (Pharaoh) said: Did we not bring *y*ou up as a child among us, and *y*ou stayed (many) years of *y*our life among us? [19]And *y*ou did (that) deed of *y*ours which *y*ou did and *y*ou are ungrateful. [20]He said: I did it then when I was in error.[d] [21]So I fled from you

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of Makkah. In the former place their chiefs were laid low, and in the latter they accepted submission.

a **(6)** It was the prophecies of their own defeat and of the predominance of Islam at which they mocked.

b **(9)** Seven prophets in all are spoken of in this chapter, and it is related how the enemies of every one of them were exterminated in the final triumph of the Truth. Yet to give an indication of the fate of the Prophet Muhammad's opponents each prophet's mention is ended with the two attributes of the Divine Being mentioned here, the *Mighty*, the *Merciful*, the first of these indicating that Truth will, even now, be made to overcome all opposition and the second that the dealing with the opponents of the Prophet would be a merciful dealing. The Prophet's opponents were defeated indeed but they were not destroyed and a reformed people rose again to power.

c **(14)** The reference is to the killing of the Egyptian, as mentioned in 28:15. It is stated here that the people of Pharaoh charged Moses with a crime, not that he was actually guilty. See v. 20 and 28:15.

d **(20)** The circumstances in which Moses' act of striking an Egyptian with his fist led to the death of the Egyptian are related in 28:15. There was no intention to kill the man, nor did Moses use any weapon with which death could be caused. The words "I was in error" (*ḍāll*) indicate *one perplexed, being unable to know what was incumbent on him*. He used his fist against the oppressor, and death was simply accidental.

when I feared you, then my Lord granted me judgment and made me a messenger. **22**And is it a favour, of which *y*ou remind me, that *y*ou have enslaved the Children of Israel?[a]

23 Pharaoh said: And what is the Lord of the worlds? **24**He said: The Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you would be sure. **25**(Pharaoh) said to those around him: Do you not hear? **26**He said: Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers of old. **27**(Pharaoh) said: Surely your messenger, who is sent to you, is mad. **28**He said: The Lord of the East and the West and all that is between them, if you have any sense. **29**(Pharaoh) said: If *y*ou take a god besides me, I will certainly put *y*ou in prison.[b] **30**He said: Even if I show *y*ou something plain? **31**(Pharaoh) said: Show it, then, if *y*ou are truthful. **32**So he threw down his staff, and — lo! — it was an obvious snake; **33**and he drew forth his hand, and — lo! — it appeared white to the onlookers.[c]

Section 3: **Moses and the enchanters**

34 (Pharaoh) said to the chiefs around him: Surely this is a skilful enchanter, **35**who desires to turn you out of your land with his enchantment. What is it then that you advise? **36**They said: Put him off and his brother and send heralds into the cities **37**that they bring to *y*ou every skilful enchanter. **38**So the enchanters were gathered together for the appointment of a well-known day, **39**and it was said to the people: Will you gather together? **40**Perhaps we may follow the enchanters, if they are triumphant.

41 So when the enchanters came, they said to Pharaoh: Will there be a reward for us, if we are triumphant? **42**He said: Yes, and surely you will then be among those who are nearest (to me). **43**Moses said to them: Throw down what you are going to throw. **44**So they threw down their cords and their rods and said: By Pharaoh's power we shall most surely be victorious. **45**Then Moses threw down his staff, and— lo! — it swallowed up their fabrication.

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a **(22)** The Israelites were employed only in menial work by Pharaoh and the Egyptians; it is this subjection to hardship which is here called *enslavement*.

b **(29)** The gods of the Egyptians were innumerable. There were abstract gods, cosmic gods, human gods and animal gods. Pharaoh's claim to divinity among a people who were willing to deify anything has, therefore, nothing strange about it.

c **(33)** See 7:108 and 20:20, 20:22, and the footnotes there.

46And the enchanters were thrown down prostrate — 47they said: We believe in the Lord of the worlds, 48the Lord of Moses and Aaron. 49(Pharaoh) said: You believe in him before I give you permission; surely he is the chief of you who taught you enchantment, so you will soon come to know. Certainly I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will crucify you all. 50They said: No harm; surely to our Lord we return. 51We hope that our Lord will forgive us our wrongs because we are the first of the believers.

Section 4: **Moses is delivered and Pharaoh drowned**

52 And We revealed to Moses, saying: Travel by night with My servants — you will be pursued. 53And Pharaoh sent heralds into the cities (proclaiming): 54These are indeed a small band, 55and they have surely enraged us, 56and we are truly a vigilant multitude. 57So We turned them out of gardens and springs, 58and treasures and goodly dwellings — 59even so. And We gave them as a heritage to the Children of Israel.[a]

60 Then they pursued them at sunrise. 61So when the two groups saw each other, the companions of Moses cried out: Surely we are overtaken. 62He said: By no means; surely my Lord is with me — He will guide me. 63Then We revealed to Moses: March on to the sea with *y*our staff.[b] So it parted, and each side was like a huge mound.[c] 64And there We brought the others near. 65And We saved Moses and those with him, all. 66Then We drowned the others. 67Surely there is a sign in this, yet most of them do not believe. 68And surely *y*our Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

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a **(59)** The pronoun *them* refers to gardens and springs, etc., in general, and not to the particular gardens, etc., from which the Egyptians were turned out. The heritage of gardens and treasures was given to the Israelites in the land of Canaan, the promised land flowing with milk and honey.

b **(63-1)** This expression is similar to the one occurring in 2:60: "March on to the rock with your staff ." Elsewhere the same idea is expressed by saying: "Strike for them a dry path in the sea, not fearing to be overtaken, nor being afraid" (20:77); see also 2:50.

c **(63-2)** The sea had gone back, thus leaving a *dry path* (20:77) for the Israelites. The meaning may be that each wave, as it receded, was like a huge mound.

Section 5: **History of Abraham**

69 And recite to them the story of Abraham. **70**When he said to his sire and his people: What do you worship? **71**They said: We worship idols, so we shall remain devoted to them. **72**He said: Do they hear you when you call (on them), **73**or do they benefit or harm you? **74**They said: But we found our fathers doing so.

75 He said: Do you then see what you worship — **76**you and your ancient sires? **77**Surely they are an enemy to me, but not (so) the Lord of the worlds, **78**Who created me, then He shows me the way, **79**and Who gives me to eat and to drink, **80**and when I am sick, He heals me, **81**and Who will cause me to die, then give me life, **82**and Who, I hope, will forgive me my mistakes on the day of Judgment.[a] **83**My Lord, grant me wisdom, and join me with the righteous, **84**and ordain for me a goodly mention in later generations, **85**and make me from among the heirs of the Garden of bliss, **86**and forgive my sire, surely he is in error, **87**and do not disgrace me on the day when they are raised — **88**the day when wealth will not avail, nor sons, **89**except him who comes to Allah with a sound heart.

90 And the Garden is brought near for the dutiful, **91**and hell is made manifest to the deviators,[b] **92**and it is said to them: Where are those that you worshipped **93**besides Allah? Can they help you or help themselves? **94**So they are hurled into it, they and the deviators, **95**and the followers of the devil, all. **96**They will say, while they quarrel in it: **97**By Allah! We were certainly in manifest error, **98**when we made you equal with the Lord of the worlds. **99**And none but the guilty led us astray. **100**So we have no intercessors, **101**nor a true friend. **102**Now, if only we could return once, we would be believers. **103**Surely there is a sign in this, yet most of them do not believe. **104**And surely *y*our Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

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a **(82)** The prophets, being always conscious of their weakness, seek Allah's protection. Expressions like this invariably indicate human weakness before Divine perfection, and are not evidence of sinfulness. Compare Jesus' confession of weakness in a similar strain: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God" (Matthew, 19:17).

b **(91)** The making manifest of hell shows that it already exists, but is hidden from the human eye, while on the day of Resurrection it will be made plain.

Section 6: **History of Noah**

105 The people of Noah rejected the messengers.[106]When their brother Noah said to them: Will you not guard against evil? [107]Surely I am a faithful messenger to you; [108]so keep your duty to Allah and obey me. [109]And I ask of you no reward for it; my reward is only with the Lord of the worlds. [110]So keep your duty to Allah and obey me. [111]They said: Shall we believe in *y*ou when the lowest (people) follow *y*ou? [112]He said: And what knowledge do I have of what they did? [113]Their reckoning is only with my Lord, if you could perceive. [114]And I am not going to drive away the believers; [115]I am only a plain warner.

116 They said: If *y*ou do not give up, Noah, *y*ou will certainly be stoned to death. [117]He said: My Lord, my people call me a liar. [118]So judge between me and them openly, and deliver me and the believers who are with me. [119]So We delivered him and those with him in the laden ark. [120]Then We drowned the rest afterwards.[a] [121]Surely there is a sign in this, yet most of them do not believe. [122]And surely *y*our Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

Section 7: **History of Hūd**

123 Ād rejected the messengers. [124]When their brother Hūd said to them: Will you not guard against evil? [125]Surely I am a faithful messenger to you; [126]so keep your duty to Allah and obey me. [127]And I ask of you no reward for it; my reward is only with the Lord of the worlds. [128]Do you build on every height a monument,[b] being vain? [129]And you make fortresses that you may abide forever. [130]And when you seize (people), you seize as tyrants. [131]So keep your duty to Allah and obey me. [132]And keep your duty to Him Who aids you with what you know — [133]He aids you with cattle and children [134]and gardens and fountains. [135]Surely I fear for you the punishment of a grievous day.

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a **(120)** Wherever Noah is mentioned, only such of his people are spoken of as having been drowned who rejected and persecuted him; see also 11:42 footnote.

b **(128)** The word *āyat*, literally a *sign*, is used here to indicate the *lofty building that should acquire renown as a sign of greatness*. These lofty buildings were, no doubt, used to terrorize others, as v. 130 shows that acts of cruelty and violence were committed by Ād, while they considered themselves safe in their fortresses.

136 They said: It is the same to us whether *y*ou admonish or do not admonish; **137**this is only a fabrication of the ancients, **138**and we will not be punished. **139**So they rejected him, then We destroyed them. Surely there is a sign in this, yet most of them do not believe. **140**And surely *y*our Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

Section 8: **History of Sālih**

141 Thamūd rejected the messengers. **142**When their brother Sālih said to them: Will you not guard against evil? **143**Surely I am a faithful messenger to you; **144**so keep your duty to Allah and obey me. **145**And I ask of you no reward for it; my reward is only with the Lord of the worlds. **146**Will you be left secure in what is here, **147**in gardens and fountains, **148**and corn-fields and palm-trees having fine flower-spikes? **149**And you carve houses out of the mountains exultingly. **150**So keep your duty to Allah and obey me. **151**And do not obey the bidding of the extravagant, **152**who make mischief in the land and do not act rightly.

153 They said: *Y*ou are only a deluded person. **154***Y*ou are nothing but a mortal like ourselves — so bring a sign if *y*ou are truthful. **155**He said: This is a she-camel; she has her portion of water, and you have your portion of water at an appointed time.[a] **156**And do her no harm, or the punishment of a grievous day will befall you. **157**But they hamstrung her, then regretted, **158**so the punishment befell them. Surely there is a sign in this, yet most of them do not believe. **159**And surely *y*our Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

Section 9: **History of Lot**

160 The people of Lot rejected the messengers. **161**When their brother Lot said to them: Will you not guard against evil?

***a* (155)** See 7:73 for Thamūd. They are described in v. 149 as carving houses out of the mountains, and, as it appears from here and 54:28, the springs of water seem to have been few, and access to these was probably specially guarded, so that they were open only at particular times. For the she-camel, see 7:73. Sālih seems to have demanded that the she-camel should be allowed to drink at such times. See 54:28, where it is stated that every share of the water will be attended by the she-camel, or that she will have access to water at all times when the others are allowed to drink. A similar demand as regards her pasture is contained in 11:64 in the words "Leave her to pasture on Allah's earth", followed by the same words as those following this demand for drink: "And do her no harm".

162 Surely I am a faithful messenger to you; **163**so keep your duty to Allah and obey me. **164**And I ask of you no reward for it; my reward is only with the Lord of the worlds. **165**Do you come to the males from among the creation, **166**and leave your wives whom your Lord has created for you? Indeed, you are a people exceeding limits.

167 They said: If *y*ou do not give up, Lot, *y*ou will surely be banished. **168**He said: Surely I abhor what you do. **169**My Lord, deliver me and my followers from what they do. **170**So We delivered him and his followers all, **171**except an old woman, among those who remained behind.[a] **172**Then We destroyed the others. **173**And We rained on them a rain; and evil was the rain on those who were warned.[b] **174**Surely there is a sign in this, yet most of them do not believe. **175**And surely *y*our Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

Section 10: **History of Shuaib**

176 The dwellers of the Grove rejected the messengers.[c] **177**When Shuaib said to them: Will you not guard against evil? **178**Surely I am a faithful messenger to you; **179**so keep your duty to Allah and obey me. **180**And I ask of you no reward for it; my reward is only with the Lord of the worlds. **181**Give full measure and do not diminish. **182**And weigh with a true balance. **183**And do not wrong people of their dues, nor act corruptly in the earth, making mischief. **184**And keep your duty to Him Who created you and the former generations.

185 They said: *Y*ou are only a deluded person, **186**and *y*ou are nothing but a mortal like ourselves, and we think *y*ou are a liar. **187**So cause a portion of the heaven to fall on us, if *y*ou are truthful.[d] **188**He said: My Lord knows best what you do.[e] **189**But they rejected him, so the punishment of the day of Covering befell them.

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a **(171)** See 7:80 for Lot. The old woman referred to here was Lot's wife.

b **(173)** See 7:84. Stones were rained on them as the result of a volcanic eruption.

c **(176)** They are the same as the people of Midian.

d **(187)** A portion of the heaven signifies a punishment from heaven.

e **(188)** The demand for the threatened punishment is always met with expressions signifying that the matter rests in the hands of Allah. Such statements are really equivalent to saying that the thing will certainly come to pass.

Surely it was the punishment of a grievous day! [a] [190]Surely there is a sign in this, yet most of them do not believe. [191]And surely *y*our Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful.

Section 11: **Prophet's opponents warned**

[192] And surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. [193]The Faithful Spirit has brought it,[b] [194]on *y*our heart that *y*ou may be a warner,[c] [195]in plain Arabic language. [196]And surely the same is in the Scriptures of the ancients.[d] [197]Is it not a sign to them that the learned ones of the Children of Israel know it? [198]And if We had revealed it to any of the foreigners, [199]and he had read it to them, they would not have believed in it.[e] [200]Thus do We make it enter into the hearts of the guilty.[f]

***a* (189)** The day of punishment is called *the day of Covering* because it covered them with punishment.

***b* (193)** The Faithful Spirit (*al-Rūḥ al-Amīn*) is the angel Gabriel, who brought the Divine revelation to the Holy Prophet. The Prophet himself was known in Makkah as *al-Amīn* or the *Faithful one* before revelation came to him.

***c* (194)** The words *on your heart* indicate that the Prophet's heart, being the receptacle of the mighty revelation, was truly responsive to the great truths contained in it. The high morals and the broad humanitarian truths which the Quran contains give us a true picture of the great mind. This is referred to in one of the earliest revelations: "And surely you have sublime morals" (68:4). The pithy but most beautiful statement of Aishah, the Prophet's wife, remains unsurpassed in depicting the character of the Holy Prophet. When asked about it she replied: *His character is the Quran,* meaning that all those wonderful pictures of moral sublimity drawn in the Quran were pictures of the noble mind to which the Quran was revealed.

***d* (196)** The prophecies relating to the advent of the Prophet Muhammad, as met with in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, are referred to very often in the Quran. The statement made here is, however, more comprehensive: *They are met with in all ancient scriptures*. See 3:81, where a covenant is spoken of as being made through all the prophets of the world with regard to the Prophet's advent. There is a reference in the next verse to the learned men of the Children of Israel in particular because the Jews and the Christians had long been in contact with the Arabs.

***e* (199)** Because prophecy plainly showed that the Arabs were to be the recipients of the revelation; see Isaiah 42:11: "Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits". In the Old Testament, Kedar, the son of Ishmael, stands for the Arab nation. Hence earlier prophecy required that the final revelation should be granted to an Arab.

***f* (200)** The meaning is that the Quran was made to enter into their hearts

201 They will not believe in it till they see the painful punishment: **202**So it will come to them suddenly, while they do not perceive; **203**then they will say: Shall we be given respite? **204**Do they still seek to hasten on Our punishment? **205**Have *y*ou then considered, if We let them enjoy themselves for years, **206**then what they are promised comes to them — **207**what they were made to enjoy will not avail them? **208**And We destroyed no town but it had (its) warners — **209**to remind. And We are never unjust. **210**And the devils have not brought it. **211**And it is not befitting for them, nor have they the power to do (it). **212**Surely they are far removed from hearing it.[a]

213 So do not call upon another god with Allah or *y*ou would be among those punished. **214**And warn *y*our nearest relations,[b] **215**and be gentle to the believers who follow *y*ou. **216**But if they disobey *y*ou, say: I am clear of what you do. **217**And rely on the Mighty, the Merciful,[c] **218**Who sees *y*ou when *y*ou stand up, **219**and *y*our movements among those who prostrate themselves. **220**Surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

221 Shall I inform you upon whom the devils descend? **222**They descend upon every lying, sinful one — **223**they give ear,

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by reason of the convincing proof of its truth; but they rejected it, as the next verse shows.

a **(212)** The argument here is similar to that advanced by Jesus when he said: "And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself" (Matthew, 12:26). The evil one cannot be the source of the Quran, for the Quran calls to righteousness. See also verses 221–223.

b **(214)** When this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet, standing on Mount Safa, invited every tribe by name, and when the representatives of all the tribes had gathered together — among them being also the Quraish and that inveterate enemy of the Holy Prophet, Abu Lahab — the Holy Prophet thus addressed them: "Tell me, if I were to inform you that a great army in the valley lies in wait to make a raid upon you, would you believe me?" "Yes!" was the reply in one voice, "for we have never found anything but truth emanating from your lips." "Then," said the Prophet, "know that I am a warner to you of an approaching punishment." "May you perish," cried out the ill-tempered Abu Lahab, "was it for this that you called us together?" (Bukhari, 65: *Surah* 26, ch. 2, hadith 4770).

c **(217)** The Prophet is here told to rely on the Mighty, the Merciful, the very words that are repeated at the end of almost every section of this chapter, thus showing that the fate of the opponents of former prophets was spoken of simply to warn his own opponents. The attribute of *mightiness* is used to indicate the power to punish the wicked, while *mercy* indicates the deliverance and triumph of the righteous, or a merciful dealing even with the opponents.

and most of them are liars.[a] **224**And (as to) the poets — the deviators follow them. **225**Do *y*ou not see that they wander in every valley,[b] **226**and that they say that which they do not do?[c] **227**Except those who believe and do good and remember Allah much, and defend themselves after they are oppressed.[d] And they who do wrong, will know to what final place of turning they will turn back.

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a **(223)** The subject of v. 212 is reverted to here. The opponents of the Quran would not listen to what is said in the Quran — they are far removed from hearing it, as stated in v. 212 — but they listen to what their leaders in evil say.

b **(225)** That is, they pursue an aimless course, while the Prophet has a set purpose before him, and it is to make people walk in the ways of righteousness.

c **(226)** The first suggestion of the disbelievers was that the Quran was the work of the devil. That being shown to be inconsistent with its very nature and with the righteousness it preached, they said that it was the work of a poet. As against this they are told that none of the characteristics of a poet's work are to be met with in the Quran. The poet never leads his followers to a life of righteousness, while the Quran was bringing about a pure transformation in the lives of those who followed it. Again, the poets say things which they do not practise, whereas the Prophet was not only a preacher of righteousness, but also an exemplar who translated into practice what he taught in words. And the weightiest consideration of all is that the poets cannot utter prophecies like those which are met with in the Quran. It is to this that attention is called in the next verse.

d **(227)** The passage gives a description of the true believers in general, a new statement being introduced with *illā* (*except*); or it may refer particularly to the poets from among the believers.

Chapter 27

Al-Naml The Naml

The title of this chapter is taken from the mention in v. 18 of a tribe known as the *Naml* in the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. It begins by dealing with the histories of Moses and Solomon, indicating the likeness of their lives with that of the Holy Prophet. He was a law-giver like Moses and eventually ruler of a kingdom as Solomon was, yet retained the simplicity of the life of Moses. The chapter then refers to the prophets Sālih and Lot whose opponents were destroyed and goes on to prophesy the triumph of the faithful and to indicate that in the Holy Prophet's case this triumph would be generally through the spiritual resurrection of his opponents rather than their destruction. This chapter belongs to the middle period at Makkah.

Section 1: **A reference to Moses' history**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Benignant, Hearing God![a] These are the verses of the Quran and the Book that makes manifest: **2**A guidance and good news for the believers, **3**who keep up prayer and give the due charity, and they are sure of the Hereafter. **4**Those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We make their deeds seem good to them, but they blindly wander on.[b] **5**These are they for whom is an evil punishment, and in the Hereafter they are the greatest losers. **6**And *y*ou are surely made to receive the Quran from the Wise, the Knowing.

7 When Moses said to his family: Surely I see a fire; I will bring you from it some news, or bring you a burning brand, so that you may warm yourselves. **8**So when he came to it, a voice issued, saying: Blessed is he who is in search of fire and those around it.[c]

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a **(1)** See 26:1 footnote, for explanation. The letters here are *ṭā* and *sīn*.

b **(4)** By *their deeds* are meant the deeds which they ought to perform. Evil deeds are made to seem good to evildoers by the devil (6:43), while Allah commends good deeds. Elsewhere we have: "But Allah has endeared the faith to you and has made it attractive in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you disbelief and transgression and disobedience" (49:7).

c **(8)** The words *man fi-l-nār* ("who is in search of fire") have been explained in several ways, the best being that in which the word *fī* (lit., *in*) may

And glory be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds! **9**O Moses, surely I am Allah, the Mighty, the Wise: **10**And throw down *y*our staff. So when he saw it in motion as if it were a snake, he turned back retreating and did not return. O Moses, do not fear. Surely the messengers do not fear in My presence — **11**Nor he who does wrong,[a] then does good instead after evil; surely I am Forgiving, Merciful, **12**and put *y*our hand into *y*our bosom, it will come forth white without evil, among nine signs to Pharaoh and his people. Surely they are a transgressing people.

13 So when Our clear signs came to them, they said: This is clear enchantment. **14**And they denied them unjustly and proudly, while their souls were convinced of them. See, then, what was the end of the mischief-makers!

Section 2: **History of Solomon**

15 And certainly We gave knowledge to David and Solomon.[b] And they said: Praise be to Allah, Who has made us excel many of His believing servants! **16**And Solomon was David's heir, and he said: O people, we have been taught the speech of birds,[c] and we have been granted all sorts of things. Surely this is manifest grace.

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be rendered as meaning *after* or *in search of*. According to another explanation, these words mean *that which is in fire* and the place where fire was seen by Moses to be burning is meant. The addition of the words "those (or, *whatever is*) around it" is to show that the whole of this land was blessed, because so many prophets for the guidance of humanity were raised there. That the fire was not a physical fire is suggested by commentators. This is in fact clear. The voice that came to Moses was the voice of God and it came in the manner in which the Divine call comes to all prophets. Moses received a Divine revelation, and what he saw was during a state of transformation.

a **(11)** The word *illā,* with which this verse opens, does not here mean *except* but is equivalent to *wāw* (*and*). Being joined to the "not" in the previous passage, the correct translation of *illā* here is *and not,* i.e., *nor*.

b **(15)** The history of David and Solomon, being the history of the temporal greatness of the Israelites, forms really a part of the history of Moses, and reference to it is in fact prophetical, to show that Islam was also destined to rise to greatness temporally as well as spiritually.

c **(16)** Solomon's understanding the speech of birds may imply the use he made of birds in carrying messages from one place to another, these messages being metaphorically called the speech of birds. The reference here is to the great resources of Solomon's kingdom in his victorious marches against near and distant enemies. Note also that Solomon says: *We* have been taught. This shows that his people also knew that speech.

17 And his forces of the jinn and the men and the birds were gathered to Solomon,[a] and they were formed into groups. **18**Until when they came to the valley of the Naml,[b] a Namlite said: O Naml, enter your houses, (so that) Solomon and his forces may not crush you, while they do not know. **19**So he smiled, wondering at her word, and said: My Lord, grant me that I may be grateful for Your favour which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good such as You are pleased with, and admit me, by Your mercy, among Your righteous servants.

20 And he reviewed the birds, then said: How is it I do not see Hudhud, or is it that he is one of the absentees? [c] **21**I will certainly punish him with a severe punishment, or kill him, unless he brings me a clear excuse. **22**And he did not remain away long, then said: I have encompassed something *y*ou do not have comprehensive knowledge of, and I have come to *y*ou from Saba' with sure information [d] — **23** I found a woman ruling over them, and she has

a **(17)** The *jinn* were men belonging to certain mountain tribes whom Solomon had subjugated. *Ṭair* may mean either *birds* or *horse*, i.e., cavalry, as this word is applied not only to birds but also to swift animals such as horses.

b **(18)** Many of the fables regarding Solomon have been due to a misconception of the word *naml,* taken as meaning 'ant'. It should be noted that *wādi-l-Naml* cannot be properly translated as the *valley of the ants*, for *Naml* is a proper noun. According to the classical dictionary *Tāj al-'Urūs*, the valley of the Naml is situated between Jibrin and Asqalan. And *Namlah* is the name of a tribe which literally signifies *the eggs of the ants*. The name Namlah used also to be given to a child in whose hands an ant was placed at its birth, because it was said such a child would be wise and intelligent.

c **(20)** The opening words may mean either a review of birds or a review of horses; see v. 17. By *Hudhud* is not to be understood the *lapwing*, but *a person of that name*. In every language many of the proper names given to people will be found to be identical with the names of animals. The Arab writers speak of a king of Himyar as *Hudad*, which is almost identical with *Hudhud* mentioned in the Quran. The Bible speaks of a king of Syria, named Ben Hadad (1 Kings 15:18, etc.). The *Muntaha-l-arab* states that Hudhad was the name of the father of Balqis, the queen of Sheba. The verses that follow show clearly that Solomon was speaking of one of his own officers. The infliction of severe punishment on a small bird by such a mighty monarch, as Solomon, and the exposition of the great religious doctrine of the Unity of God by the lapwing, are quite incomprehensible.

d **(22)** *Saba'* is the same as the Sheba of the Bible. The story as given here is not met with in the Bible, but it was known to Jewish rabbis. The Bible speaks of the coming of the queen of Sheba to Solomon with large presents to test him. See 1 Kings 10 and 2 Chron. 9. And later on, it speaks of many strange women as Solomon's wives (1 Kings 11).

been given all sorts of things and she has a mighty throne. [24]I found her and her people adoring the sun instead of Allah, and the devil has made their deeds seem good to them and turned them from the way, so they do not go aright — [25]so that they do not worship Allah, Who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and the earth and knows what you hide and what you proclaim. [26]Allah, there is no God but He, the Lord of the mighty Throne.

27 He said: We shall see whether *y*ou speak the truth or whether *y*ou are a liar. [28]Take this letter of mine and hand it over to them, then turn from them and see what (answer) they return.

29 She said: Chiefs, an honourable letter has been delivered to me. [30]It is from Solomon, and it is in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, [31]proclaiming, Do not exalt yourselves against me and come to me in submission.

Section 3: **History of Solomon**

32 She said: Chiefs, advise me in this affair of mine; I never decide an affair until you are in my presence. [33]They said: We are possessors of strength and possessors of mighty prowess. And the command is *y*ours, so consider what *y*ou will command. [34]She said: Surely the kings, when they enter a town, ruin it and make the noblest of its people low; and that is what they do. [35]And surely I am going to send them a present, and to see what (answer) the messengers bring back.

36 So when (the envoy) came to Solomon, he said: Will you help me with wealth? But what Allah has given me is better than what He has given you. Indeed, you are exultant because of your present.[a] [37]Go back to them, so we shall certainly come to them with forces which they have no power to oppose, and we shall certainly expel them from there in disgrace, and they shall be humbled.

***a* (36)** Why was Solomon angry on receiving a present from the queen? Later events, as narrated further on, show that the present sent to Solomon was a throne which was decorated either with nude art or with idolatrous paintings, or was offensive in some other way. Solomon's order in v. 38 to bring *her throne* to him shows clearly that by it was meant the throne which she had sent to him as a present, and his order in v. 41 to make alterations in this throne shows that the paintings on the throne were abhorrent to a true worshipper of God.

38 He said: Chiefs, which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?[a] **39**One audacious among the jinn said: I will bring it to *y*ou before *y*ou rise up from *y*our place; and surely I am strong, trustworthy for it.[b] **40**One having knowledge of the Book said: I will bring it to *y*ou in the twinkling of an eye.[c] Then when he saw it settled beside him,[d] he said: This is of the grace of my Lord, that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful. And whoever is grateful, he is grateful only for the good of his own soul, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely my Lord is Self-sufficient, Bountiful. **41**He said: Alter her throne for her; we may see whether she follows the right way or is of those who do not go aright.[e]

42 So when she came, it was said: Was *y*our throne like this? She said: It is as it were the same; and we were given the knowledge before about it, and we submitted.[f] **43**And what she worshipped

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***a* (38)** As usual, the narrative here omits the return of the messengers to the queen, and her willingness to submit to Solomon on receiving the threat mentioned in the last verse, and continues at the point where Solomon makes preparations to receive her. By *her throne* is meant the throne which she had sent as a present.

***b* (39)** The *rising up from the place* does not signify his standing up from the sitting posture, but his marching away from the place where he was at the time. The reference to being trustworthy shows that the execution of the work required an honest worker. The audacious jinn is apparently one of the Amalekites, who were men of large stature.

***c* (40-1)** By *one having knowledge of the Book* is meant an Israelite as against the Amalekite referred to above. The literal meaning of the concluding words of the sentence is, *before your gaze returns to you*. It is the same as *in the twinkling of an eye*, the idea conveyed being that he could do it without delay.

***d* (40-2)** Strange and curious legends are introduced by some commentators on the supposition that the events narrated took place in immediate succession. The words *so when he saw it settled beside him* do not indicate that he saw it settled in the course of the conversation given in the previous passage. It is an altogether different incident.

***e* (41)** As pointed out in v. 36 footnote, Solomon was offended by the throne which the queen sent him as a present because of the indecent or idolatrous paintings on it, and therefore before she came to him, he caused certain alterations to be made in the throne. The purpose of the alteration is given here in express words, *whether she follows the right way*. In fact, she seems to have invited Solomon in the symbolic language of the paintings on the throne to her religion of idolatry, and by making alterations Solomon indicated that he could not make a compromise with idolatry.

***f* (42)** By putting the question, *Was your throne like this,* Solomon wanted

besides Allah prevented her; for she was from a disbelieving people. **44**It was said to her: Enter the palace. But when she saw it she thought it was a great expanse of water, and prepared herself to meet the difficulty.[a] He said: Surely it is a palace made smooth with glass. She said: My Lord, surely I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.[b]

Section 4: **Sālih and Lot**

45 And certainly We sent to Thamūd their brother Sālih, saying: Serve Allah. Then — lo! — they became two factions, contending. **46**He said: My people, why do you hasten on the evil before the good? Why do you not ask forgiveness of Allah so that mercy may be shown to you? **47**They said: We consider *y*ou and those with *y*ou an evil omen. He said: (The cause of) your evil fortune is with Allah; rather, you are a people who are tried.

48 And there were in the city nine persons who made mischief

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to draw her attention pointedly to the alterations made. The queen's answer shows that her envoy had already told her that Solomon was offended by the present which she had sent — *we were given the knowledge before about it*. The submission referred to in the act of surrendering her kingdom does not mean that she had turned a Muslim. This is made clear in v. 43; she was prevented from becoming a true Muslim owing to her worship of the sun. Hence submission to God comes later; see the concluding words of v. 44.

a **(44-1)** The use of the word *sāq* (lit., shank or lower leg) to signify *difficulty* or *distress* in many phrases is a recognized idiomatic usage in Arabic. The expression used here means that *she prepared herself to meet the difficulty*. (*Editor's Note:* The literal translation, *she bared her legs,* has been made the basis of many groundless, vulgar stories about this episode.)

b **(44-2)** It appears that, in order to impress upon the queen that it was the unseen hand of God that worked in nature, Solomon made water to flow under the smooth glass floor of his palace. Thus he conveyed to her the message in symbolic language that God was the real force behind all, as she had conveyed to him the message of idolatry in the symbolic language of the throne she had sent him as a present. The queen mistook the glass for the water which ran beneath; and when Solomon drew her attention to it, she at once realized her own error in worshipping outward objects, like the sun, while the real force or the source of life was Allah, Whose hand worked in these objects. Perhaps in words, too, he impressed on her the great message of Divine Unity. The result was that the queen accepted the religion of Solomon — *I submit with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the worlds*. The Quran here contradicts the Bible which holds that Solomon had gone over to idol-worship on account of his non-Israelite wives, while the Quran states that his wives were converts to his religion and believers in Divine Unity.

in the land and did not act aright.[a] [49]They said: Swear to one another by Allah that we shall attack him and his family by night, then we shall say to his heir: We did not witness the destruction of his family, and we are surely truthful.[b] [50]And they planned a plan, and We planned a plan, while they did not perceive. [51]See, then, what was the end of their plan, that We destroyed them and their people, all (of them). [52]So those are their houses fallen down because they did wrong. Surely there is a sign in this for a people who know. [53]And We delivered those who believed and kept their duty.

54 And Lot, when he said to his people: Do you commit foul deeds, while you see? [55]Will you come to men lustfully rather than women? Indeed, you are a people who act ignorantly. [56]But the answer of his people was only that they said: Drive out Lot's followers from your town; surely they are a people who would keep pure! [57]But We delivered him and his followers except his wife; We ordained her to be of those who remained behind. [58]And We rained on them a rain; and evil was the rain on those who had been warned.[c]

Section 5: **The faithful will be exalted**

59 Say: Praise be to Allah and peace on His servants whom He has chosen! Is Allah better, or what they set up as partners (with Him)? *[60]Or, Who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water from the cloud? Then with it We cause to grow beautiful gardens — it is not possible for you to make their trees to grow. Is there a god with Allah? Indeed, they are a people who deviate! [61]Or, Who made the earth a resting-place, and made in it rivers, and raised on it mountains, and placed between the two seas

*Part 20

***a* (48)** There is no doubt a reference here to the enemies of the Holy Prophet, the chief of them being nine in number, eight of whom were slain at Badr, except Abu Lahab who died at Makkah on hearing the news of the defeat at Badr.

***b* (49)** There seems to be a prophetical reference here to the plot against the Holy Prophet, for the same plan was ultimately agreed upon by the Quraish to do away with him. One man from every tribe of the Quraish was selected and, taking the Prophet unawares, they were to thrust their swords into his body simultaneously so that no particular tribe could be held guilty. This was agreed upon immediately before the Prophet's flight to Madinah, and thus the incident as relating to Sālih is meant as a prophecy.

***c* (58)** Stones were rained on them; see 7:84.

a barrier?[a] Is there a god with Allah? Indeed, most of them do not know!

62 Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil, and will make you successors in the earth?[b] Is there a god with Allah? Little mindful are you! **63**Or, Who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea, and Who sends the winds as good news before His mercy? Is there a god with Allah? Exalted be Allah above what they set up as partners (with Him)! **64**Or, Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and Who gives you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? Is there a god with Allah? Say: Bring your proof, if you are truthful.

65 Say: No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen but Allah; and they do not know when they will be raised. **66**No, their knowledge does not reach the Hereafter. Indeed, they are in doubt about it. Indeed, they are blind to it.[c]

Section 6: **The spiritual resurrection**

67 And those who disbelieve say: When we have become dust and our fathers (too), shall we really be brought forth? **68**We have certainly been promised this — we and our fathers before; this is nothing but stories of the ancients! **69**Say: Travel in the earth, then

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a **(61)** See 25:53.

b **(62)** The manifestation of the marvellous power of God in nature, the creation of the heavens and the earth, the sending down of rain, the making of rivers and mountains — all these wonderful signs of the existence of the Great Creator are here followed by another equally wonderful sign of the existence of God, the manifestation of His marvellous power in man. But mark the contrast. This manifestation of the existence of God is not to be sought in the greatness and power of man as the conqueror of the forces of nature, but in his weakness in his great distress when, unable to find help from any source, he throws himself on the Divine threshold and seeks help from God. But what is more, this manifestation of God's power is beautifully mingled with prophecy — *and He will make you successors in the earth*. The distressed ones here are no other than the Muslims, who were being cruelly persecuted and tortured, and they are told that the manifestation of God's power in making them rulers of the earth would be as great as it was in His creation of the heavens and the earth. This also shows the purpose underlying the narration of the histories of David and Solomon.

c **(66)** Human knowledge cannot reach the life after death and God has given this knowledge to man through His revelation. But people are in doubt about it; in fact, they shut their eyes to it.

see what was the end of the guilty! [70]And do not grieve for them, nor be distressed because of what they plan.

71 And they say: When will this promise come to pass, if you are truthful? [72]Say: Maybe something of what you seek to hasten has drawn near to you. [73]And surely *y*our Lord is full of grace to people, but most of them do not give thanks. [74]And surely *y*our Lord knows what their hearts conceal and what they manifest. [75]And there is nothing hidden in the heaven and the earth but it is in a clear book.

76 Surely this Quran declares to the Children of Israel most of what they differ about. [77]And surely it is a guidance and a mercy for the believers. [78]Truly *y*our Lord will judge between them by His judgment, and He is the Mighty, the Knowing. [79]So rely on Allah. Surely *y*ou are on the plain truth.

80 Certainly *y*ou cannot make the dead to hear, nor can *y*ou make the deaf to hear the call, when they turn back retreating.[a] [81]Nor can *y*ou lead the blind out of their error. *Y*ou can make none to hear except those who believe in Our messages, so they submit. [82]And when the word comes to pass against them, We shall bring forth for them a creature from the earth that will speak to them, because people did not believe in Our messages.[b]

Section 7: **Passing away of opposition**

83 And the day when We gather from every nation a company from among those who rejected Our messages, then they will be formed into groups. [84]Until, when they come (before Him), He will say: Did you reject My messages without comprehending them

***a* (80)** This verse is a clear testimony to what is meant by the Prophet's raising the dead; for here we are told that, if the dead turn back retreating, the Prophet cannot make them hear. Evidently this verse and the opening words of the next speak of the reprobate who shut their eyes and close their ears to all truth.

***b* (82)** By the *creature from the earth that will speak to them* are evidently meant people who are bent low upon earth. These are the materialistic nations of the West, "speaking" to the world, who have lost all sense of the higher values of life. The coming forth of this creature, the *dābbat al-arḍ,* is one of the signs of the approach of the Hour according to the Hadith. But the Hour may mean either the day of Judgment or the doom of a people, and this verse gives us an indication that the Hour in this case stands for the doom of a nation; because here it is spoken of as being a punishment for not believing in the Divine messages.

by knowledge? Or what was it that you did? **85**And the word will come to pass against them because they were unjust, so they will not speak. **86**Do they not see that We have made the night that they may rest in it, and the day to give light? Surely there are signs in this for a people who believe.

87 And the day when the trumpet is blown, then those in the heavens and those in the earth will be struck with terror, except such as Allah please. And all shall come to Him humbled.[a] **88**And *y*ou see the mountains, *y*ou think them firmly fixed — they shall pass away as the passing away of the cloud: the handiwork of Allah, Who has made everything thoroughly. Surely He is Aware of what you do.[b] **89**Whoever brings good, he will have better than it; and they will be secure from terror that day. **90**And whoever brings evil, these will be thrown down on their faces into the Fire. Are you rewarded (anything) except for what you did?

91 I am commanded only to serve the Lord of this city,[c] Who has made it sacred, and His are all things, and I am commanded to be of those who submit, **92**and to recite the Quran. So whoever goes aright, goes aright only for the good of his own soul — and (to) whoever goes astray, say: I am only a warner. **93**And say: Praise be to Allah! He will show you His signs so that you shall recognize them. And *y*our Lord is not heedless of what you do.[d]

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a **(87)** As a foretaste of what was in store for the rejectors of the Truth, the prophecy was also brought to fulfilment in this life. The whole of Arabia recognized the Holy Prophet as its temporal and spiritual head, and the proud opponents were humbled.

b **(88)** In the passing away of the mountains there is a clear reference to the removal of the mighty men who opposed the Prophet's preaching. This is also shown by the concluding words of the verse, which clearly speak of the punishment of the evil deeds by One Who is Aware of what they do.

c **(91)** The statement here that the Prophet is commanded to serve *the Lord of the city of Makkah* contains an allusion that the servant of the Lord will be the lord of that city.

d **(93)** Note the firmness of the tone in which the showing of signs is asserted.

Chapter 28

Al-Qaṣaṣ The Narrative

This chapter is chiefly a *narrative* of the story of Moses. After relating events of the life of Moses, it announces that a prophet like him had now appeared with true revelation like the revelation of Moses, and its opponents will be humbled. In the end it says that their great wealth will not make them successful and prophesies that the Holy Prophet will return to Makkah in triumph. This chapter belongs to the middle period at Makkah, although v. 85 would appear to have been revealed when the Holy Prophet was fleeing from Makkah to Madinah.

Section 1: **History of Moses — Infancy**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Benignant, Hearing, Knowing God![a] **2**These are the verses of the Book that makes manifest. **3**We recite to *y*ou the story of Moses and Pharaoh with truth, for a people who believe. **4**Surely Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and made its people into parties, weakening one party from among them;[b] he slaughtered their sons and let their women live. Surely he was one of the mischief-makers. **5**And We desired to bestow a favour upon those who were considered weak in the land, and to make them the leaders, and to make them the heirs,[c] **6**and to grant them power in the land, and to make Pharaoh and Hāmān and their forces see from them what they feared.[d]

***a* (1)** See 26:1 footnote, for explanation.

***b* (4)** The two parties were the Israelites and the Egyptians, the latter being made the taskmasters of the former. This refers no doubt to the persecutions of the Muslims. The Quraish, the stronger party, wanted to crush the weaker party of the Muslims.

***c* (5)** By making them heirs is not meant that they would be made heirs to Pharaoh's possession, but heirs to a kingdom in the promised land of Canaan. And this refers also to the establishment of the kingdom of Islam and the defeat of its persecutors.

***d* (6)** Hāmān seems to have been a minister of Pharaoh. He is spoken of again in v. 8 and 38, and also in 29:39 and 40:24, 36. Pharaoh and his counsellors feared that the Israelites, who were aliens in the land of Egypt, might one day become powerful and supreme in the land. Hence they oppressed and persecuted

7 And We revealed to Moses' mother, saying: Suckle him; then when *y*ou fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear, nor grieve; surely We shall bring him back to *y*ou and make him a messenger (of Ours). **8**So Pharaoh's people took him up — he would be an enemy and a grief for them. Surely Pharaoh and Hāmān and their forces were wrongdoers. **9**And Pharaoh's wife said: A joy of the eyes to me and to *y*ou — do not kill him; maybe he will be useful to us, or we may take him for a son. And they did not perceive.

10 And the heart of Moses' mother was free (from anxiety).[a] She would almost have disclosed it, if We had not strengthened her heart, that she might be one of the believers. **11**And she said to his sister: Follow him up. So she watched him from a distance, while they did not perceive. **12**And We did not allow him to be suckled before, so she said: Shall I point out to you the people of a house who will bring him up for you, and they will wish him well? **13**So We gave him back to his mother that she might be comforted, and not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of Allah is true. But most of them do not know.[b]

Section 2: **History of Moses — flees Egypt**

14 And when he attained his maturity and became full-grown, We granted him wisdom and knowledge. And thus do We reward those who do good (to others). **15**And he went into the city at a time of carelessness on the part of its people, so he found in it two men fighting — one being of his community and the other of his enemies; and he who was of his community cried out to him for help against him who was of his enemies, so Moses struck him with his fist and killed him. He said: This is on account of the devil's doing; surely he is an enemy, openly leading astray.[c] **16**He said:

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them in various ways. Yet the Divine intention was to bring about what Pharaoh feared. Such also was the Divine intention with regard to the persecuted Muslims.

a **(10)** Her heart became free from anxiety on account of the assurance which she had received through Divine revelation; the words that follow show that her heart had been strengthened with patience, so it cannot be said to have become devoid, or free, of patience.

b **(13)** The reference is clearly to the opponents of the Holy Prophet, who did not know that the promise of Allah, as given to the faithful, would prove true.

c **(15)** The word "this", in Moses' statement, refers to the punishment which

My Lord, surely I have done harm to myself,[a] so protect me; so He protected him. Surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. **17**He said: My Lord, because You have bestowed a favour on me, I shall never be a backer of the guilty.

18 And (the next day) he was in the city, fearing, awaiting, when suddenly, he who had asked his assistance the day before was crying out to him for help. Moses said to him: *Y*ou are surely clearly doing wrong.[b] **19**So when he desired to seize him who was an enemy to them both, he said: Moses, do *y*ou intend to kill me as *y*ou killed a person yesterday? *Y*ou only desire to be a tyrant in the land, and *y*ou do not intend to be of those who act aright.

20 And a man came running from the remotest part of the city. He said: Moses, the chiefs are consulting together to kill *y*ou, so depart (at once); surely I am one of *y*our well-wishers. **21**So he went forth from it, fearing, awaiting. He said: My Lord, deliver me from the unjust people.

Section 3: **History of Moses — in Midian**

22 And when he turned his face towards Midian, he said: Maybe my Lord will guide me in the right path. **23**And when he came to the water of Midian, he found there a group of men watering, and he found besides them two women keeping back (their flocks). He said: What is the matter with you two? They said: We cannot water until the shepherds take away (their sheep) from the water; and our father is a very old man. **24**So he watered (their sheep) for them, then went back to the shade, and said:

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he had given to the Egyptian, the meaning being that it was on account of his devilish deed that the Egyptian had been so punished. The Rabbinical explanation of Exodus 2:12 is that the Egyptian merited death "because he had forced an Israelitish woman to commit adultery with him" (*Jewish Encyclopedia,* vol. ix, p. 48). The Quran does not name the offence, but there is no doubt that it calls his offence *a devilish deed*. V. 17 shows clearly that Moses did not consider himself as one who had done an unjust deed or helped a guilty person. See also 26:14.

a **(16)** Moses' prayer is not evidence of his being guilty, for the word *ẓulm* used here indicates *making to suffer harm, loss, detriment* or *failure*, and this is the meaning of *ẓulm* adopted in 7:160 and 18:33. The meaning here is that he had risked his own life in giving help to another.

b **(18)** Moses helped the man on the first occasion because he was oppressed, but now this very man was oppressing another. Therefore he refused to help him.

My Lord, I stand in need of whatever good You may send to me.

25 Then one of the two women came to him walking bashfully. She said: My father invites *y*ou that he may reward *y*ou for having watered for us.[a] So when he came to him and related to him the story, he said: Do not fear, *y*ou are secure from the unjust people. **26**One of them said: Father, employ him; surely the best one *y*ou can employ is the strong, the faithful one. **27**He said: I desire to marry one of these two daughters of mine to *y*ou on condition that *y*ou serve me for eight years; but, if *y*ou complete ten, it will be of *y*our own free will, and I do not wish to be hard on *y*ou. If Allah please, *y*ou will find me (to be) one of the righteous.[b] **28**He said: That is (agreed) between me and *y*ou; whichever of the two terms I fulfil, there will be no injustice to me; and Allah is surety over what we say.

Section 4: **History of Moses — Prophethood and mission**

29 Then when Moses had completed the term, and was travelling with his family, he perceived a fire on the side of the mountain. He said to his family: Wait, I see a fire; maybe I will bring you from it some news or a brand of fire, so that you may warm yourselves. **30**And when he came to it, he was called from the right side of the valley in the blessed spot of the bush: O Moses, surely I am Allah,

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a **(25)** The commentators say this man was Shuaib, and Shuaib is mentioned by the name of Jethro in the Bible.

b **(27)** In Moses' stay at Midian for ten years, there is a prophetical reference to the ten years of the Prophet's life at Madinah. The mention of eight years has another underlying significance, for it was after eight years that the Prophet came back to Makkah as a conqueror, a clear reference to which is contained further on in v. 85: *He Who has made the Quran binding on you will surely bring you back to the Place of Return*. This occurred exactly eight years after his Flight. That such is the real significance of relating this narrative is made clear in v. 45, where the Prophet is thus addressed: *And you were not dwelling among the people of Midian, reciting to them Our messages*. It is, as it were, to say that it was Moses who lived among the people of Midian, but his episode really conveys the news of what will happen to you.

It may be added here that Moses was paid his wages, and the condition of his staying in Midian for eight or ten years was as much in his own interest as in the interest of Jethro, for as the Bible narrative shows, Pharaoh had died by the time that Moses' stay in Midian had come to an end.

the Lord of the worlds: [31]And throw down *y*our staff. So when he saw it in motion as if it were a snake, he turned away retreating, and did not look back. O Moses, come forward and do not fear; surely *y*ou are secure (here). [32]Insert *y*our hand into *y*our bosom, it will come forth white without harm, and remain calm in fear. These two are two arguments from *y*our Lord to Pharaoh and his chiefs. Surely they are a transgressing people.[a]

33 He said: My Lord, I killed one of them, so I fear that they may kill me. [34]And my brother, Aaron, he is more eloquent in speech than I, so send him with me as a helper to confirm me. Surely I fear that they would reject me. [35]He said: We will strengthen *y*our arm with *y*our brother, and We will give you both an authority, so that they shall not reach you.[b] With Our signs, you two and those who follow you, will triumph.

36 So when Moses came to them with Our clear signs, they said: This is nothing but fabricated deceit, and we never heard of it among our fathers of old! [37]And Moses said: My Lord knows best who comes with guidance from Him, and whose shall be the good end of the abode. Surely the wrongdoers will not be successful.

38 And Pharaoh said: Chiefs, I know no god for you besides myself; so kindle a fire for me, Hāmān, on (bricks of) clay, then prepare for me a tower, so that I may reach the God of Moses, and surely I think him a liar.[c] [39]And he was unjustly proud in the land, he and his armies, and they thought that they would not be brought back to Us. [40]So We caught hold of him and his armies, then We cast them into the sea, and see what was the end of the wrongdoers. [41]And We made them leaders who call to the Fire, and on the day of Resurrection they will not be helped.[d] [42]And We made a curse to follow them in this world, and on the day of Resurrection they will be hideous.

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a **(32)** See 7:108, 20:20, 20:22.

b **(35)** The meaning is: *so that they will not be able to injure you.*

c **(38)** Pharaoh mocks at the idea of the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and derisively commands one of his ministers to prepare bricks — such being the significance of *kindling a fire on clay* — and to erect a tower so that he may look into the heavens to discover the Lord of the heavens and the earth.

d **(41)** Pharaoh is made a prototype of evil, and the opponents of the Prophet are warned that by walking in Pharaoh's footsteps they will meet a similar fate.

Section 5: **A Prophet like Moses**

43 And certainly We gave Moses the Book after We had destroyed the former generations — clear arguments for people and a guidance and a mercy, that they may be mindful. **44**And *y*ou were not on the western side when We revealed to Moses the commandment, nor were *y*ou among those present;[a] **45**but We raised up generations, then life became prolonged to them. And *y*ou were not dwelling among the people of Midian,[b] reciting to them Our messages, but We are the Sender (of messengers).

46 And *y*ou were not at the side of the mountain when We called, but a mercy from *y*our Lord that *y*ou may warn a people to whom no warner came before *y*ou, that they may be mindful.[c] **47**And in case, if a disaster should befall them for what their hands have already done, they should say: Our Lord, why did You not send to us a messenger so that we might have followed Your messages and been from among the believers? **48**But (now) when the Truth has come to them from Us, they say: Why is he not given the like of what was given to Moses? Did they not disbelieve in what was given to Moses before? They say: Two enchantments backing up each other! And they say: Surely we are disbelievers in both.[d] **49**Say: Then bring some (other) Book from Allah which is a

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a **(44)** Moses' prophecy about the advent of the Prophet — of a *prophet like him* from among the Ishmaelites, the brethren of the Israelites — was so clear that one would think that the Prophet was there at the side of the mountain and Moses saw him with his own eyes. The opening words of the next verse show that a very long time had elapsed between these two prophets. The prophecy of Moses of the advent of a prophet *like him* was fulfilled after about two thousand years, and yet none of the prophets who followed Moses had ever claimed to be a *prophet like Moses*, not even Jesus Christ, the last of the line of the Israelite prophets.

b **(45)** See v. 27. Moses lived in Midian for ten years, just as the Prophet passed ten years of his life at Madinah, yet what a transformation was wrought in the course of these ten years! This very fact was a clear proof of his truth.

c **(46)** The meaning of v. 44–46 is: *You were not there, but it was Divine mercy that put a prophecy into the mouth of Moses regarding you*. This is made clear by the words *a mercy from your Lord that you may warn…*. The people to whom no warner had come before were the Arabs. Compare 32:3, 36:6.

d **(48)** The disbelievers did not adopt any one firm position against the Holy Prophet, and whenever one objection was shown to be erroneous, they took refuge in another. At the advent of the Prophet they said that he should have

better guide than these two, I will follow it — if you are truthful.[a] **50**But if they do not answer *you*, know that they only follow their low desires. And who is more in error than he who follows his low desires without any guidance from Allah? Surely Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

Section 6: **The truth of Revelation**

51 And certainly We have made the Word to have many connections for their sake, so that they may be mindful.[b] **52**Those to whom We gave the Book before it, they are believers in it.[c] **53**And when it is recited to them they say: We believe in it; surely it is the Truth from our Lord; we were indeed, before this, submitting ones. **54**These will be granted their reward twice, because they are steadfast, and they repel evil with good and spend (on good works) out of what We have given them.[d] **55**And when they

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received a revelation like the revelation of Moses, but when the likeness was pointed out to them, they said that both Moses and Muhammad were deceivers who enchanted people by their eloquence, the one helping the other, and therefore they believed neither in the one nor in the other.

a **(49)** The meaning is that, if you do not admit the truth of either revelation, you should show some other revelation existing in the world, which should offer better guidance. This statement only draws attention to the fact that the revelation granted to Moses and that granted to the Holy Prophet both occupy a higher position than any other revelation. And this is in fact true, for among all the sacred books of the world the Bible occupies a position second only to the Quran.

b **(51)** What is implied here is that the word of Allah, as contained in the Quran, is made to have many points of connection with previous revelation, so that it may be the easier for them to be reminded of its truth. Even if they did not believe in previous revelation, the broad points of likeness in the principles of two different prophets appearing at such a distance of time from each other, among entirely different nations, and under totally different circumstances, and the fulfilment of the prophecies uttered by one in the other, afforded conclusive evidence of the truth of them both.

c **(52)** It is not meant that all those who have previously been given the Scriptures believe in the Quran. The verse only draws attention to the fact that all believe in the truth of revelation from Allah, and they cannot deny the points of connection between the two revelations, the truth of the fundamental principles and the fulfilment of prophecies. But only those would believe who have submitted themselves already to Allah, as the verse that follows shows.

d **(54)** The reason for a double reward — which only means a *greater reward* — is given in the words that follow. They had to suffer persecution, and

hear idle talk, they turn aside from it and say: For us are our deeds and for you your deeds. Peace be on you! We do not desire the ignorant.

56 Surely *y*ou cannot guide whom *y*ou love, but Allah guides whom He pleases; and He knows best those who walk aright.[a] **57**And they say: If we follow the guidance with *y*ou, we should be carried off from our country. Have We not settled them in a safe, sacred territory to which fruits of every kind are drawn? A sustenance from Us — but most of them do not know.[b] **58**And how many a town have We destroyed which exulted in its means of subsistence! So those are their abodes: they have not been dwelt in after them except a little. And We are ever the Inheritors.[c] **59**And *y*our Lord never destroyed the towns, until He had raised in their metropolis a messenger, reciting to them Our messages, and We never destroyed the towns except when their people were wrongdoers. **60**And whatever things you have been given are only a provision of this world's life and its adornment, and whatever is with Allah is better and more lasting. Do you not then understand?

Section 7: **Opponents shall be brought low**

61 Is he to whom We have promised a goodly promise, which he will meet with, like him whom We have provided with the provisions of this world's life, then on the day of Resurrection he

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not only did they remain steadfast in these great trials, but they repelled the evil of their persecutors with good, and in addition to all this made great sacrifices by spending in the cause of Truth. For double reward, see also 33:31 and 57:28.

a **(56)** It is related that when Abu Talib was on his deathbed, the Holy Prophet asked him to believe in Divine Unity. Abu Jahl, being by him at the time, dissuaded him from doing so, saying that he should not desert the religion of his fathers. Abu Talib died an unbeliever, and the words *you cannot guide whom you love* were a comfort to the Prophet (Bukhari, 65: *Surah* 28, 1). But the words are true in a general sense as well. The Prophet wished that all people should accept the Truth and better their lives. But all this was to be brought about gradually.

b **(57)** The verse speaks first of the unfounded fears of those who thought that the weakness of the Muslims would result in the seizure, death, or expulsion of those who accepted the faith of Islam. In reply they are told that the prophecies which declare Makkah to be a safe and sacred territory, to which people will flock in all ages, must come to fulfilment, and Makkah will ultimately be theirs for whose sake these prophecies were uttered.

c **(58)** That is, even now the Divine kingdom will be established, and the true believers in God will be made masters of the country.

will be of those brought up (for punishment)?[a] **62**And the day when He will call them and say: Where are those whom you asserted to be My partners? **63**Those against whom the word has proved true will say: Our Lord, these are they whom we caused to deviate — we caused them to deviate as we ourselves deviated. We declare our innocence before You. Us they never worshipped.[b] **64**And it will be said: Call your associate-gods. So they will call upon them, but they will not answer them, and they will see the punishment. If only they had followed the right way!

65 And the day He will call them, then say: What was the answer you gave to the messengers? **66**On that day excuses will become obscure to them, so they will not ask each other.[c] **67**But as to him who repents and believes and does good, maybe he will be among the successful. **68**And *y*our Lord creates and chooses whom He pleases. To choose is not theirs. Glory be to Allah and supremely exalted is He above what they set up as partners (with Him)! **69**And *y*our Lord knows what their hearts conceal and what they proclaim. **70**And He is Allah, there is no God but He! His is the praise in this (life) and the Hereafter; and His is the judgment, and to Him you will be brought back.

71 Say: Do you see if Allah were to make the night to continue incessantly on you till the day of Resurrection, who is the god besides Allah that could bring you light? Will you not then hear? **72**Say: Do you see if Allah were to make the day to continue incessantly on you till the day of Resurrection, who is the god besides Allah that could bring you the night in which you take rest? Do you not then see? **73**And out of His mercy He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest in it, and that you may seek of His grace (in the day), and that you may give thanks.

***a* (61)** There are two parties spoken of here: the Prophet and his followers, who have received a goodly promise from Allah, though weak and oppressed at the time, and the powerful enemy, who has all the provisions of life in his possession, but who will one day be called upon to receive judgment.

***b* (63)** By *those against whom the word has proved true* are meant *the leaders in unbelief*. Their saying *Us they never worshipped* shows that these very leaders are spoken of as the gods whom their followers worship.

***c* (66)** They will not be able to offer an excuse, for the vanity of the false excuses, which satisfied them here, would then become manifest to them. Nor will they ask each other, for each will know the falsity of the excuses of the others.

74 And the day when He will call them and say: Where are those whom you asserted to be My partners? **75**And We shall draw forth from among every nation a witness and say: Bring your proof. Then shall they know that the Truth is Allah's and what they forged will fail them.

Section 8: **Korah's wealth leads him to ruin**

76 Korah was surely from among the people of Moses, but he oppressed them. And We gave him treasures, so much so that his hoards of wealth would weigh down a body of strong men.[a] When his people said to him: Do not exult; surely Allah does not love the exultant. **77**And seek the abode of the Hereafter by means of what Allah has given *y*ou, and do not neglect *y*our portion of the world, and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to *y*ou, and do not seek to make mischief in the land. Surely Allah does not love the mischief-makers. **78**He said: I have been given this only on account of the knowledge I have. Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him generations who were mightier in strength than he and greater in assemblage? And the guilty are not questioned about their sins.[b]

79 So he went out to his people in his finery. Those who desired this world's life said: If only we had the like of what Korah is given! Surely he is possessed of mighty good fortune! **80**But those who were given the knowledge said: Woe to you! Allah's reward is better for him who believes and does good, and none is made to receive this except the patient. **81**So We made the earth to swallow him up [c] and his abode. He had no army to help him against Allah, nor could he defend himself. **82**And those who had yearned for his place the day before began to say: Ah! (Know) that Allah amplifies

***a* (76)** The story of Korah, or *Qārūn*, his revolt against the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and his being swallowed up by the earth, is given in the Bible in the book of Numbers, ch. 16. The only addition of any importance to the story as given in the Quran is the mention of his wealth, a fact noticed in Rabbinical literature. There may be a reference in the mention of Korah's wealth to the modern materialistic tendency of making the accumulation of wealth the great object of life to the utter neglect of the Truth. The hankering after wealth and the amassing of gold leads undoubtedly to ruin, as it is leading the world today.

***b* (78)** They will not be asked to give any explanation for their sins, as Allah is All-Knowing.

***c* (81)** The meaning conveyed is that he perished.

provision for whom He pleases of His servants and restricts (it also); if Allah had not been gracious to us, He would have humbled us. Ah! (Know) that the ungrateful are never successful.

Section 9: **The Prophet will return to Makkah**

83 That abode of the Hereafter, We assign it to those who have no desire to exalt themselves in the earth nor to make mischief. And the good end is for those who keep their duty. **84**Whoever brings good, he will have better than it; and whoever brings evil, those who do evil will be recompensed only for what they did.

85 He Who has made the Quran binding on *y*ou will surely bring *y*ou back to the Place of Return.[a] Say: My Lord knows best him who has brought the guidance and him who is in manifest error. **86**And *y*ou did not expect that the Book would be inspired to *y*ou, but it is a mercy from *y*our Lord, so do not be a backer of the disbelievers. **87**And let them not turn *y*ou aside from the messages of Allah after they have been revealed to *y*ou, and call (people) to *y*our Lord and do not be of those who set up partners (with Allah). **88**And do not call with Allah any other god. There is no God but He. Everything will perish but He. His is the judgment, and to Him you will be brought back.

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a **(85)** The "Place of Return" (*ma'ād*) here has been taken to mean Makkah in classical interpretations, because the conquest of it was promised to the Prophet, so that it was the place to which he would return. But Makkah is really called the Place of Return because the pilgrims return to it. According to some, this verse was revealed on the Prophet's departure from Makkah, i.e., on his way to Madinah. It contains a clear promise of the Prophet being brought back to the city from which he was now being expelled.

Chapter 29

Al-'Ankabūt The Spider

This chapter is entitled *The Spider* as v. 41 compares false beliefs with a spider's web, which shall be swept away by the current of truth. It begins by stating that believers must undergo trials and persecutions, even by their parents, before truth can triumph. These sufferings purify them. Then it relates histories of prophets who underwent suffering. It goes on to refer to the purifying effect of the Quran on the believers. Finally, it warns the opponents of their fate and comforts the believers by stating that their sufferings will change to a state of happiness and their exertions and striving in the cause of truth will be fruitful. Chapters 29 to 32 form one group revealed near the close of the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Trials purify**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Best Knower.[a] **2**Do people think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and will not be tried?[b] **3**And indeed We tried those before them, so Allah will certainly know those who are true and He will know the liars.[c] **4**Or do they who work evil think that they will escape Us? Evil is it what they judge! **5**Whoever hopes to meet with Allah, the term of Allah is then surely coming. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing. **6**And whoever strives hard, strives for himself. Surely Allah is above need of (His) creatures.[d] **7**And those who believe and do good, We shall certainly do away with their afflictions[e] and reward them for the best of what they did.

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a **(1)** See 2:1 footnote, for explanation.

b **(2)** By the trials spoken of in these verses are meant the persecutions of the believers by the disbelievers. This is made clear in v. 10.

c **(3)** The *knowing* in this case relates to a knowledge of the event when it takes place, when reward or punishment is meted out to a person for what he does.

d **(6)** As shown under 25:52, the word *jihād* occurs in Makkan revelation frequently, and carries its proper significance of *striving hard* in Allah's way. The suffering of persecutions and tortures at the hands of their enemies for the sake of their faith was no less a *jihād* for the Muslims at Makkah than their fighting in defence of Islam at Madinah.

e **(7)** These words may signify either *doing away with their afflictions* or

8 And We have enjoined on man goodness to his parents. But if they strive to make *y*ou set up partners with Me, of which *y*ou have no knowledge, do not obey them.[a] To Me is your return, so I will inform you of what you did. **9**And those who believe and do good, We shall surely make them enter among the righteous.

10 And among people is he who says: We believe in Allah; but when he is persecuted for the sake of Allah, he thinks the persecution of people to be as the punishment of Allah.[b] And if help comes from *y*our Lord, they will say: Surely we were with you. Is not Allah the Best Knower of what is in the hearts of mankind? **11**And certainly Allah will know those who believe, and He will know the hypocrites. **12**And those who disbelieve say to those who believe: Follow our path and we will bear your wrongs. And they can never bear any of their wrongs at all. Surely they are liars. **13**And they will certainly bear their own burdens, and other burdens besides their own burdens; and they will certainly be questioned on the day of Resurrection as to what they forged.[c]

Section 2: **Noah and Abraham**

14 And We indeed sent Noah to his people, so he remained among them a thousand years save fifty years.[d] And the deluge

trials, or *doing away with their evil deeds*. I prefer the first because it is of the trials and afflictions of the believers that these verses speak. If the second significance is adopted, it would mean that the evil deeds which the believers did before they accepted the Truth would be effaced, because the course of their lives was now changed.

a **(8)** This verse, while signifying the importance of obedience to parents, warns against attaching over-importance even to filial duty. It shows that when an important duty clashes with a still higher one, the former is to be sacrificed for the latter.

b **(10)** The meaning is that those who are weak in faith consider the persecution by the disbelievers, which was necessary to strengthen and purify their faith, as if it were a punishment from Allah for their change of faith. The latter part of the verse is a prophecy as to what the weak in faith will say when they see the help of Allah coming to the Muslims.

c **(13)** The Quran does not anywhere say that the burden of one shall be taken away by another. Each one is responsible for what he does. The "other burdens" are really their own burdens in misleading others, and thus the two burdens spoken of here are the burden of one's own wrongdoing and the burden of misleading others.

d **(14)** The Bible gives 950 years to be the age of Noah. It is not improbable

overtook them, and they were wrongdoers. **15**So We delivered him and the inmates of the ark, and made it a sign to the nations.

16 And (We sent) Abraham, when he said to his people: Serve Allah and keep your duty to Him. That is better for you, if you know. **17**You only worship idols besides Allah and you invent a lie. Surely they whom you serve besides Allah control no sustenance for you; so seek sustenance from Allah and serve Him and be grateful to Him. To Him you will be brought back.

18 And if you reject, nations before you did indeed reject (the Truth). And the duty of the Messenger is only to deliver the message clearly. **19**Do they not see how Allah originates the creation, then reproduces it? Surely that is easy to Allah.[a] **20**Say: Travel in the earth then see how He makes the first creation, then Allah creates the latter creation. Surely Allah is Powerful over all things.[b] **21**He punishes whom He pleases and has mercy on whom He pleases, and to Him you will be turned back. **22**And you cannot escape in the earth nor in the heaven, and you have no protector or helper besides Allah.

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that the span of man's life may have been greater in his earlier history than at present, and Noah may have attained an extraordinary age among his compatriots. But there are indications that the reference here is to the abiding for 950 years of the law preached by Noah, his place then being taken by Abraham, as the mention of Abraham immediately afterwards shows.

a **(19)** The law of creation and destruction of things, which is constantly working in nature, finds an expression in the lives of nations: a nation is brought into existence, then it is swept away and a new nation raised in its place. It is to this law that the verse refers as a warning to the idolatrous Makkans that the time had now come when their place would be taken by another nation. This is made clear in the verses that follow. It should be noted that verses 18–23 are parenthetical, being an address to the opponents of the Holy Prophet. The Quran frequently adopts this method of warning in the middle of another narration, for its object is not to relate a story, but to warn those who opposed the spread of Truth as revealed to the Holy Prophet.

b **(20)** Elsewhere, the words *travel in the earth* are always followed by *then see what was the end of the rejectors*, instead of which we have here *how He makes the first creation, then Allah creates the latter creation*. This shows that what is meant here is the disappearance of one nation to give place to another. (*Editor's Note:* There may also be a hint here that by *travelling in the earth* one can find evidence of evolution, as Charles Darwin discovered by his *travels*.)

Section 3: **Abraham and Lot**

23 And those who disbelieve in the messages of Allah and the meeting with Him, they despair of My mercy, and for them is a painful punishment. **24**But the answer of his people was only that they said: Kill him or burn him! But Allah delivered him from the fire. Surely there are signs in this for a people who believe.[a] **25**And he said: You have only taken idols besides Allah by way of friendship between you in this world's life, then on the day of Resurrection you will deny one another and curse one another; and your abode is the Fire, and you will have no helpers.

26 So Lot believed in him. And he said: I am fleeing to my Lord. Surely He is the Mighty, the Wise.[b] **27**And We granted him Isaac and Jacob, and ordained prophethood and the Book among his offspring. And We gave him his reward in this world, and in the Hereafter he will surely be among the righteous.

28 And (We sent) Lot, when he said to his people: Surely you commit foul deeds which none of the nations has done before you. **29**Do you come to males and commit robbery on the highway, and commit evil deeds in your assemblies?[c] But the answer of his people was only that they said: Bring on us Allah's punishment, if you are truthful. **30**He said: My Lord, help me against the mischievous people.

Section 4: **Opposition to Truth ever a failure**

31 And when Our messengers came to Abraham with good news, they said: We are going to destroy the people of this town, for its people are wrongdoers. **32**He said: Surely in it is Lot.

***a* (24)** As in 21:69, so here, it is not stated that Abraham was actually cast into the fire. On the other hand, the plan was either *to kill* or *to burn* him, and therefore the *fire* may only stand for the opposition which these plans involved.

***b* (26)** The words *I am fleeing to my Lord* indicate his flight to another country to where he was commanded to flee by his Lord. This is more clearly stated in 19:48: "And I withdraw from you," being followed by the statement in 19:49: "So when he withdrew from them…" This makes it further clear that his deliverance from the fire was brought about by his flight to another country.

***c* (29)** Three sins are ascribed to Lot's people — homosexuality, highway robbery, and openly committing evil deeds in their assemblies. Therefore it is a mistake to explain all incidents in connection with Lot's story only with reference to homosexuality as the sole evil of which they were guilty.

They said: We know well who is in it; we shall certainly deliver him and his followers, except his wife; she is of those who remain behind. **33**And when Our messengers came to Lot, he was grieved on account of them, and he lacked strength to protect them. And they said: Do not fear, nor grieve; surely we will deliver *y*ou and *y*our followers, except *y*our wife — she is of those who remain behind. **34**Surely We are going to bring down upon the people of this town a punishment from heaven, because they transgressed. **35**And certainly We have left a clear sign of it for a people who understand.[a]

36 And to Midian (We sent) their brother Shuaib, so he said: My people, serve Allah and fear the Last Day, and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief. **37**But they rejected him, so a severe earthquake overtook them and they lay prostrate in their abodes. **38**And Ād and Thamūd! And some of their dwellings are indeed apparent to you. And the devil made their deeds seem good to them, so he kept them back from the path, and they could see clearly. **39**And Korah and Pharaoh and Hāmān! And certainly Moses came to them with clear arguments, but they behaved haughtily in the land; and they could not outstrip (Us). **40**So each one We punished for his sin. On some of them We sent a violent storm, and some of them the rumbling overtook, and some of them We caused the earth to swallow, and some of them We drowned.[b] And it was not Allah, Who wronged them, but they wronged themselves.

41 The parable of those who take guardians besides Allah is as the parable of the spider that makes for itself a house; and surely the frailest of houses is the spider's house — if only they knew![c] **42**Surely Allah knows whatever they call upon besides Him. And He is the Mighty, the Wise. **43**And these parables, We set them forth

***a* (35)** Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities destroyed, are in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, on the road from Arabia: "And it is on a road that still abides" (15:76).

***b* (40)** For these punishments, in order, see 7:72, 78, 84; 28:81; 2:50; 7:64.

***c* (41)** A trust in false deities, which stands for all false beliefs, is here compared with a spider's web to express the nature of its extreme frailty. It may prosper for a time, but no sooner is the light of criticism and research brought to bear upon it than it vanishes and leaves no trace behind. This also refers to the plans of the Holy Prophet's opponents, which were destined to be brought to naught by reason of their inability to withstand the overwhelming advance of Truth.

for people, and none understand them but the learned. **44**Allah created the heavens and the earth with truth. Surely there is a sign in this for the believers.

Section 5: **The Quran is a purifier**

Part 21

45 Recite what has been revealed to *y*ou of the Book and keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force). And Allah knows what you do.[a] **46**And do not argue with the People of the Book except by what is best,[b] save such of them as act unjustly.[c] But say: We believe in what has been revealed to us and revealed

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a **(45)** This verse invites the followers of all religions to accept the Quran on account of its purifying effect upon life, as the previous scriptures had ceased to effect deliverance from the bondage of sin. The verse also lays down the right principle for getting rid of the bondage of sin in the words *the remembrance of Allah is the greatest*, i.e., *the most powerful and effective restraint* upon sin. It is a living belief in the Divine power, knowledge, and goodness that restrains people from walking in the ways of His displeasure.

The recitation of the Book, the keeping up of prayer, and the remembrance of Allah are really identical; for the Quran is recited in prayers, and the Quran is the best means of the remembrance of Allah. The Quran is pre-eminently a Book that manifests the glory, greatness, grandeur, goodness, love, purity, power, and knowledge of the Supreme Being. While, as generally understood, by the remembrance of Allah is meant His glorification and praise in prayer, it is also here meant Allah's remembrance of man or His raising him to a place of eminence. Thus the significance would be that through prayer to God, not only is man freed from the bondage of sin, but (which is greater than this) he is raised to a place of higher eminence.

b **(46-1)** The Quran here explains that it is the broad principles of religion that should demand paramount consideration. The fundamental principle of religion is that God exists and that He reveals Himself to man, and it is common to all revealed religions. The only difference is that a Muslim's is a purer monotheism, a conception of the Divine Being which gives the most perfect attributes to Him while declaring Him to be free from all imperfections and weaknesses, a conception which cannot reasonably be criticized by anyone who admits a belief in a Supreme Being. A Muslim's conception of Divine revelation is wider than that of the follower of any other religion, recognizing, as it does, that Divine revelation is granted in all ages and to all nations. A Muslim, therefore, admits the truth of all the prophets and revelations, and the follower of any other religion has nothing to lose but everything to gain by accepting Islam.

c **(46-2)** The words "save such of them as act unjustly" do not mean that controversy is to be carried on with these in a different manner, but that the unjust would not accept this reasonable interpretation of the principles of religion. This is made clear in the verse that follows.

to you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit. **47**And thus have We revealed the Book to *y*ou.[a] So those whom We have given the Book believe in it, and some of these [b] (also) believe in it; and none deny Our messages except the disbelievers. **48**And *y*ou did not recite before it any book, nor did *y*ou transcribe one with *y*our right hand, for then could the liars have doubted.[c] **49**Rather, it is clear messages in the hearts of those who are granted knowledge.[d] And none deny Our messages except the wrongdoers.

50 And they say: Why are not signs sent down upon him from his Lord? Say: Signs are with Allah only, and I am only a plain warner.[e] **51**Is it not enough for them that We have revealed to *y*ou the Book which is recited to them? Surely there is mercy in this and a reminder for a people who believe.[f]

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a **(47-1)** *And thus have We revealed the Book*; that is, by confirming the truth of all previous revelation.

b **(47-2)** The word *these* refers to Arabs, who possessed no sacred scriptures.

c **(48)** The broad principles of religion and the beautiful moral and spiritual truths which find expression in the Quran could not have been collected, if such a collection by human exertion were possible, except by one who had knowledge of all the previous scriptures; but the Holy Prophet had not read even a single book. He could neither read nor write, and his inability to do either is thus a confirmation of his truth. Leaving aside all the principles and truths, if we consider the broad principles that Islam taught with regard to the truth of Divine revelation in all ages and to all nations, a truth never taught or recognized before the Holy Prophet, it is remarkable that such a broad truth should have been preached by one who had never read the scriptures of any religion and who lived in a country which was almost cut off from all communication with other countries. See also 7:157 footnote 1.

d **(49)** The Quran contains not only truths which are met with in previous scriptures, but also others which are not to be found in any scripture, and which are only in the hearts of the learned ones, or those that may ever be conceived by the learned ones.

e **(50)** The Prophet is a warner, and gives warning in due time that the signs are with Allah, Whose power to send these signs they deny. Read also in this connection verses 53–55, which uphold the coming of the punishment, leaving no doubt as to the meaning of signs being *with Allah*.

f **(51)** This is another reply to those who demanded signs. The Quran is a mercy, if they would only accept it. They could see how the believers had benefited by it; how a wonderful transformation had been wrought in their lives. Indeed, this was direct evidence of the truth of the Holy Word, for to effect a pure transformation in the lives of those who would follow it was its avowed object, while the overthrow of its enemies was only an indirect testimony.

Section 6: **Warning and consolation**

52 Say: Allah is sufficient as a witness between me and you — He knows what is in the heavens and the earth. And those who believe in falsehood and disbelieve in Allah, these it is that are the losers. **53**And they ask *y*ou to hasten on the punishment. And if a time had not been fixed, the punishment would certainly have come to them. And certainly it will come to them all of a sudden, while they do not perceive. **54**They ask *y*ou to hasten on the punishment, and surely hell encompasses the disbelievers — **55**the day when the punishment will cover them from above them, and from beneath their feet![a] And He will say: Taste what you did.

56 O My servants who believe, surely My earth is vast, so serve Me only.[b] **57**Every soul must taste of death; then to Us you will be returned. **58**And those who believe and do good, We shall certainly give them an abode in high places in the Garden in which rivers flow, abiding in it. Excellent (is) the reward of the workers, **59**who are patient, and on their Lord they rely! **60**And how many a living creature does not carry its sustenance! Allah sustains it and yourselves. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing.[c]

61 And if *y*ou ask them, Who created the heavens and the earth and made the sun and the moon subservient, they would say: Allah. How are they then turned away (from truth)! **62**Allah amplifies provision for whom He pleases of His servants, and restricts (it) for him (also). Surely Allah is Knower of all things. **63**And if *y*ou ask them, Who is it that sends down water from the clouds, then gives life with it to the earth after its death, they will say: Allah. Say: Praise be to Allah! But most of them do not understand.[d]

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a **(55)** The expression used is simply to indicate the all-encompassing nature of the punishment, which will not leave them a way to escape. Compare 6:65.

b **(56)** This is to comfort the Muslims against the severe persecutions by their enemies. If they are persecuted at Makkah, they will find a refuge elsewhere.

c **(60)** This is a consolation to the Muslims that the giving up of their concerns and business at Makkah will not lead to their ruin. (*Editor's Note:* This verse also points out that, as in nature sustenance for all creatures is provided for by God, so it is a duty of man to ensure that all creatures continue to receive their sustenance for their survival.)

d **(63)** Most of them did not understand that the dead earth was now about to be raised to life.

Section 7: **Triumph of the faithful**

64 And this world's life is but an idle sport and play. And the home of the Hereafter, that surely is the Life, if only they knew! **65**So when they ride in the ships, they call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience; but when He brings them safe to the land, then they set up partners (with Him), **66**so as to be ungrateful for what We have given them, and that they may enjoy. But they shall soon know. **67**Do they not see that We have made a sacred territory secure, while people are carried off by force from around them?[a] Will they still believe in falsehood and disbelieve in the favour of Allah?

68 And who is more unjust than one who forges a lie about Allah, or calls the Truth a lie when it has come to him? Is there not an abode in hell for the disbelievers? **69**And those who strive hard for Us, We shall certainly guide them in Our ways. And Allah is surely with the doers of good.

***a* (67)** The *ḥaram* ("sacred territory") includes the city of Makkah and several miles of territory around it. War is forbidden within these limits. The reference in *people are carried off by force* is to the great insecurity of life and property in Arabia, while no one dared violate the sacredness of Makkah.

Chapter 30

Al-Rūm The Romans

This chapter is named after its prophecy of the victory of *the Romans* over the Persians. Disclosing this news, it also prophesies a great Muslim victory over their oppressors. The respective conditions of the two groups will soon be reversed, it adds. It goes on to say that the same Divine power which controls physical nature will bring about the triumph of Islam, and that as Islam appeals to man's inner nature itself, it will be accepted universally. Finally, it states that a great moral transformation will be brought about in Arabia by Islam and the mighty opposition to it will be overthrown. Chapters 29 to 32 form one group revealed near the close of the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **A great prophecy**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Best Knower.[a] **2**The Romans are defeated **3**in a near land, and they, after their defeat, will gain victory[b]

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a **(1)** See 2:1 footnote, for explanation.

b **(3)** The struggle between Persia and the Roman Empire had existed for a long time. In 602 C.E., Chosroes II of Persia began war with Rome: "His armies plundered Syria and Asia Minor, and in 608 advanced to Chalcedon. In 613 and 614 Damascus and Jerusalem were taken by the General Shahabaraz, and the Holy Cross was carried away in triumph. Soon after, even Egypt was conquered. The Romans could offer but little resistance, as they were torn by internal dissensions and pressed by the Avars and Slavs" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Art. "Chosroes II"). When the news of this conquest reached Makkah, the Quraish were jubilant, as their sympathies were with the fire-worshipping Persians more than with the Christians, who, being the followers of the scriptures, were classed by them with the Muslims. It was in 615 or 616 C.E. that this revelation came to the Prophet, containing two different prophecies, one about the defeat of the victorious Persians, who had reached the very gates of Constantinople, by the Romans, who were by this time quite exhausted, and the other about the defeat of the powerful Makkans by the handful of persecuted Muslims.

A time limit was also announced along with these two prophecies, during which they would be brought to fulfilment. The word *biḍ'* occurring in the beginning of the next verse means *from three to nine* years, according to the best authorities. It was exactly within nine years, in 624 C.E., that the tables were turned against the powerful Persian Empire, the same being the year in which the mighty Quraish suffered a defeat at the hands of the helpless Muslims at Badr.

[4]within nine years. Allah's is the command before and after. And on that day the believers will rejoice [5]in Allah's help.[a] He helps whom He pleases, and He is the Mighty, the Merciful — [6](it is) Allah's promise! Allah will not fail in His promise, but most people do not know.

7 They know the outward of this world's life, but of the Hereafter they are heedless. [8]Do they not reflect within themselves? Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them but with truth, and (for) an appointed term. And surely most of the people are deniers of the meeting with their Lord. [9]Have they not travelled in the earth and seen what was the end of those before them? They were stronger than these in prowess, and dug up the earth,[b] and built on it more than these have built. And their messengers came to them with clear arguments. So it was not Allah, Who wronged them, but they wronged themselves. [10]Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the messages of Allah and mocked at them.

Section 2: **The two parties**

11 Allah originates the creation, then reproduces it, then to Him you will be returned. [12]And the day when the Hour comes, the guilty will despair. [13]And they will have no intercessors from among their associate-gods, and they will deny their associate-gods. [14]And the day when the Hour comes, that day they will be separated one from the other. [15]Then as to those who believed and

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"In 624 he (Heraclius) advanced into northern Media, where he destroyed the great fire-temple of Goudzak" (*ibid*). In the same year, 313 Muslims, many of whom were raw, inexperienced youths without any arms, routed a strong force of about a thousand of the Quraish warriors, killing all the leaders and dealing a deathblow to the power of the enemy. The successes of the Muslim army, on the one hand, and of the Romans, on the other, continued until the Quraish were utterly crushed by the conquest of Makkah in 630, while "the Persian Empire, from the apparent greatness which it had reached ten years ago, sank into hopeless anarchy" (*ibid*).

***a* (5)** The help of Allah is the help that was over and over again promised to the believers against the idolatrous Makkans. Thus we have here a clear prophecy of the victory of the Muslims over the Makkans within nine years from the pronouncement of the prophecy. It was fulfilled in the Battle of Badr.

***b* (9)** The digging of the earth includes its ploughing for cultivation, its digging for minerals and the making of aqueducts, as also the laying of the foundations of buildings.

did good, they will be made happy in a garden. **16**And as for those who disbelieved and rejected Our messages and the meeting of the Hereafter, they will be brought to punishment.

17 So glory be to Allah when you enter the evening and when you enter the morning. **18**And to Him be praise in the heavens and the earth, and in the afternoon, and when the sun declines.[a] **19**He brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and gives life to the earth after its death. And thus will you be brought forth.[b]

Section 3: **Manifestations of Divine power in Nature**

20 And of His signs is this, that He created you from dust, then — lo! — you are mortals who disperse. **21**And of His signs is this, that He created mates for you from yourselves that you might find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion.[c] Surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect. **22**And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. Surely there are signs in this for the learned. **23**And of His signs is your sleep by night and by day and your seeking of His bounty. Surely there are signs in this for a people who would hear. **24**And of His signs is this, that He shows you the lightning for fear and for hope, and sends down water from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death. Surely there are signs in this for a people who understand. **25**And of His signs is this, that the heaven and the earth subsist by His command. Then when He calls you, from the earth, you come forth.

***a* (18)** The five times of prayer are clearly indicated in this and the previous verse, the evening prayer comprising both the prayer at sunset and the later evening prayer. The five times of prayer were observed at Makkah, and places at which the Muslims gathered for prayers are mentioned in reports relating to very early days of the Prophet's mission.

***b* (19)** This clearly points to the rising of a great nation from the Arabs, who were spiritually as well as intellectually dead.

***c* (21)** The close relation between the male and the female (i.e., husband and wife) is expressed here. These words do not imply the act of the physical creation of the female from the male. The Quran explains itself when it refers to the ties of love and compassion, and to the quietness of mind which a married person finds in his spouse. The verse gives us the Islamic ideal of marriage which serves the purpose not only of the increase of the human race but also that of the spiritual advancement of both the man and the woman by referring to the quietness of mind which they find in each other.

26 And His is whosoever is in the heavens and the earth. All are obedient to Him. **27**And He it is Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and it is very easy to Him. And His is the most exalted state in the heavens and the earth; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

Section 4: **Appeal to human nature**

28 He sets forth to you a parable about yourselves. Do you have, among those whom your right hands possess, partners in what We have given you, so that you are equal in it, you fearing them as you fear each other?[a] Thus do We make the messages clear for a people who understand. **29**But those who are unjust follow their low desires without any knowledge; so who can guide him whom Allah leaves in error? And they shall have no helpers.

30 So set *y*ourself for religion, being upright, the nature made by Allah in which He has created mankind. There is no altering Allah's creation. That is the right religion — but most people do not know[b] — **31**turning to Him; and keep your duty to Him, and keep up prayer and do not be of those who set up partners (with Allah), **32**of those who split up their religion and become sects; each faction rejoicing in what it has.

33 And when harm afflicts people, they call upon their Lord, turning to Him, then when He makes them taste of mercy from Him — lo! — some of them begin to set up partners with their Lord, **34**so as to be ungrateful for what We have given them. So enjoy yourselves a while — you will soon come to know. **35**Or, have We sent to them an authority so that it speaks of what they set up as

***a* (28)** The owner and the owned are not equal. So the objects which they worshipped from among God's creation cannot be equal to the Creator, Who is the Intelligent Cause and Controller of all.

***b* (30)** Islam according to this verse is the natural religion of mankind, or a religion to the truth of which human nature bears testimony. Its fundamental principles, the Unity and all-comprehensive providence of Allah, the universality of Divine revelation, and the accountability for all actions in a life after death, are recognized by all religions and all nations, and their universal acceptance is a clear evidence that it is the very nature of man that bears testimony to their truth. Islam removes all limitations upon these three fundamental doctrines of the religion of humanity, and gives them as wide a significance as humanity itself. The other fundamental principle of the natural religion of man is mentioned in v. 38.

partners with Him?[a] **36**And when We make people taste of mercy they rejoice in it, and if an evil befall them for what their hands have already done — lo! — they despair. **37**Do they not see that Allah amplifies provision for whom He pleases, and restricts (it also)? Certainly there are signs in this for a people who believe.

38 So give to the near of kin his due, and to the needy and the traveller. This is best for those who desire Allah's pleasure, and these it is who are successful.[b] **39**And whatever you lay out at usury, so that it may increase through the property of (other) people, it does not increase with Allah; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allah's pleasure — these (givers) will get manifold.[c] **40**Allah is He Who created you, then He sustains you, then He causes you to die, then brings you to life. Is there any of your associate-gods who does any of it? Glory be to Him, and supremely exalted is He above what they set up as partners (with Him)!

Section 5: **A transformation**

41 Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what man's hands have earned, that He may make them taste (the consequences of) some of what they have done, so that they may turn back.[d] **42**Say: Travel in the earth, then see what was the end of

***a* (35)** No prophet can be shown to have received a revelation setting up creatures on an equal or co-operative plane with the Creator. Every such doctrine, besides being against the testimony of human nature and reason, stands condemned because of the absence of any revelation in its support.

***b* (38)** Charity to fellow man is the practical outcome of the doctrine of the brotherhood of humanity, which is one of the two principles of the natural religion of mankind.

***c* (39)** This verse lays stress upon the doctrine of charity to one's fellow-man. It says that some people seek to increase their wealth by means of getting interest on money, i.e., they seek an increase of their wealth at the expense of other people's property; but that a Muslim should seek an increase of his wealth by giving it, for the sake of Allah, to help his fellow-man.

***d* (41)** History bears evidence to the truth of these words. Before the advent of the Holy Prophet corruption and darkness prevailed in all countries of the world, affecting the beliefs of people as well as their deeds. Religions had long ceased to have any healthy effect on the lives of their votaries, and their followers had not only ceased to practise virtue, but, worst of all, they had begun to look upon vice as virtue, and many of them attributed indecent and immoral practices to their sages and their gods. Such widespread corruption had never previously

those before! Most of them set up partners (with Allah). **43**Then set *y*ourself to the right religion before the day comes from Allah which cannot be averted: on that day they will be separated. **44**Whoever disbelieves will be responsible for his disbelief; and whoever does good, such prepare (good) for their own souls, **45**that He may reward out of His grace those who believe and do good. Surely He does not love the disbelievers.

46 And of His signs is this, that He sends forth the winds bearing good news, and that He may make you taste of His mercy, and that the ships may glide by His command, and that you may seek of His grace, and that you may be grateful.[a] **47**And certainly We sent before *y*ou messengers to their people, so they came to them with clear arguments, then We punished those who were guilty. And to help believers is ever incumbent on Us. **48**Allah is He Who sends forth the winds, so they raise a cloud, then He spreads it forth in the sky as He pleases, and He breaks it, so that you see the rain coming forth from inside it; then when He causes it to fall upon whom He pleases of His servants — lo! — they rejoice, **49**though they were before this, before it was sent down upon them, in sure despair.

50 Look then at the signs of Allah's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death. Surely He is the Giver of life to the dead;

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existed in the world's history. J.H. Denison writes in *Emotion as the Basis of Civilization:* "In the fifth and sixth centuries the civilized world stood on the verge of chaos. The old emotional cultures that had made civilization possible … had broken down, and nothing had been found adequate to take their place.… It seemed then that the great civilization that it had taken four thousand years to construct was on the verge of disintegration, and that mankind was likely to return to that condition of barbarism where every tribe and sect was against the next, and law and order were unknown.… Civilization, like a gigantic tree whose foliage had over-reached the world … stood tottering … rotted to the core" (pp. 265–268). And then adds, speaking of Arabia: "It was among these people that the man was born who was to unite the whole known world of the east and south" (p. 269).

With the light of Islam, and through the torch of knowledge and civilization lit in Arabia, a new era dawned not only over Arabia, but also over other countries. Europe remained the longest in darkness, and it was only after the torch of knowledge had been lighted in Spain by Muslims that both the Renaissance and the Reformation came.

a **(46)** The verse calls attention to the change that was already coming over the peninsula; this was a clear indication of the mighty transformation that was ultimately to be brought about.

and He is Powerful over all things. **51**And if We send a wind and they see it yellow, they would after that certainly continue to disbelieve.[a] **52**So surely *y*ou cannot make the dead to hear, nor can *y*ou make the deaf to hear the call, when they turn back retreating. **53**Nor can *y*ou guide the blind out of their error. *Y*ou can make none to hear but those who believe in Our messages, so they submit.

Section 6: **Overthrow of opposition**

54 Allah is He Who created you from a state of weakness, then He gave strength after weakness, then ordained weakness and grey hair after strength.[b] He creates what He pleases, and He is the Knowing, the Powerful. **55**And the day when the Hour comes, the guilty will swear: They did not remain but an hour. Thus are they ever turned away (from truth). **56**And those who are given knowledge and faith will say: Certainly you remained according to the ordinance of Allah till the day of Resurrection — so this is the day of Resurrection — but you did not know. **57**So that day their excuse will not benefit those who were unjust, nor will they be granted goodwill.

58 And certainly We have set forth for people in this Quran every kind of description. And if *y*ou bring them a sign, those who disbelieve would certainly say: You are only deceivers. **59**Thus does Allah seal the hearts of those who do not know.[c] **60**So be patient; surely the promise of Allah is true; and let not those disquiet *y*ou who have no certainty.

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a **(51)** *It,* in this verse, refers to the *seed-produce,* which is meant by the expression "gives life to the earth" in the previous verse; the meaning is, the seed-produce may be rendered yellow or caused to wither away by a blast of the wind. The allusion is to the disasters which would strike a blow at the disbelievers' plans. It also refers to their persistence in disbelief, in spite of the afflictions which they experience.

b **(54)** There is a deeper reference here to the law of the rise, growth and decay of nations.

c **(59)** Allah's sealing the hearts thus really means their own persistence in disbelief and wickedness, as the preceding verse shows.

Chapter 31

Luqmān

The name of this chapter is taken from that of the Ethiopian sage, *Luqmān,* to whose story it refers. It deals with the following topics: success to be attained by the Muslims, wise advice of Luqmān to his son, now meant for Muslims, greatness of Divine power, and the doom of the mighty opponents of truth. Chapters 29 to 32 form one group revealed near the close of the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Believers will be successful**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Best Knower.[a] **2**These are the verses of the Book of Wisdom — **3**a guidance and a mercy for the doers of good, **4**who keep up prayer and give the due charity and who are certain of the Hereafter. **5**These are on a guidance from their Lord, and these are they who are successful.

6 And among people is he who takes, instead, frivolous discourse to lead astray from Allah's path without knowledge, and to make it a mockery.[b] For such is a humiliating punishment. **7**And when Our messages are recited to him, he turns back proudly, as if he had not heard them, as if there were deafness in his ears; so announce to him a painful punishment. **8**Those who believe and do good, for them are Gardens of bliss, **9**to abide therein. A promise of Allah in truth! And He is the Mighty, the Wise.

10 He created the heavens without pillars that you can see, and cast mountains on the earth in case it should quake with you,[c] and He spread on it animals of every kind. And We send down water from the clouds, then cause to grow in it (vegetation) of every noble kind. **11**This is Allah's creation; now show Me what those besides Him have created. No, the unjust are in manifest error.

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a **(1)** For explanation, see 2:1 footnote.

b **(6)** It is a mistake to think that a particular person is meant here. The statement is general and applies to all those who take the Quran for a mockery.

c **(10)** See 16:15 footnote.

Section 2: **Luqmān's advice to his son**

12 And certainly We gave Luqmān wisdom,[a] saying: Give thanks to Allah. And whoever is thankful, is thankful for the good of his own soul; and whoever denies, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praised. **13**And when Luqmān said to his son, while he instructed him: My son, set up no partner with Allah. Surely setting up partners (with Him) is a grievous wrong. **14**And We have enjoined on man concerning his parents — his mother bears him with faintings upon faintings and his weaning takes two years — saying: Give thanks to Me and to *y*our parents. To Me is the eventual coming.[b] **15**And if they strive to make *y*ou set up partners with Me, of which *y*ou have no knowledge, do not obey them,[c] and keep kindly company with them in this world, and follow the way of him who turns to Me; then to Me is your return, then I shall inform you of what you did.

16 My son, even if it is the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, even though it were in a rock, or in the heaven or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Surely Allah is Knower of subtleties, Aware. **17**My son, keep up prayer and enjoin good and forbid evil, and bear patiently whatever befalls *y*ou. Surely this is a matter of great resolution. **18**And do not turn *y*our face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exultingly. Surely Allah does not love any self-conceited boaster. **19**And pursue the right course in *y*our going about and lower *y*our voice. Surely the most hateful of voices is braying of donkeys.[d]

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a **(12)** From what is stated of him, Luqmān seems to have been an Ethiopian. It is very probable that the Greek "*Æ*sop" is a corruption of "Ethiopian" and is identical with Luqmān. The Quran accepts many prophets besides those mentioned in the Bible.

b **(14)** Verses 14 and 15 are parenthetical, enjoining the duty of obedience to parents, because it is a parent who is advising his son.

c **(15)** Despite the great stress that the Quran lays on the duty of obedience to parents, it also warns against attaching undue importance to that duty when the same clashes with a still higher duty, namely, duty to one's Maker. In fact any duty, however great, must be sacrificed before a higher duty, and one's duty to one's Maker is the highest of all duties.

d **(19)** Humility and meekness were taught by every prophet. An Ethiopian too preached the meekness and humility which was preached by Jesus.

Section 3: **Greatness of Divine power**

20 Do you not see that Allah has made subservient to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and granted to you His favours complete outwardly and inwardly? And some people dispute about Allah without knowledge or guidance or a Book giving light.[a] **21**And when it is said to them, Follow what Allah has revealed, they say: No, we follow that (path) upon which we found our fathers. What! Though the devil calls them to the punishment of the burning Fire!

22 And whoever submits himself to Allah and does good (to others), he indeed takes hold of the firmest handle. And Allah's is the end of (all) matters. **23**And whoever disbelieves, do not let his disbelief grieve *y*ou. To Us is their return, then We shall inform them of what they did. Surely Allah is Knower of what they did. Surely Allah is Knower of what is in the hearts. **24**We give them to enjoy a little, then We shall drive them to a severe punishment. **25**And if *y*ou ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will say: Allah. Say: Praise be to Allah! But most of them do not know. **26**To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Surely Allah is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised.

27 And if all the trees in the earth were pens, and the sea with seven more seas added to it (were ink), the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Surely Allah is Mighty, Wise.[b] **28**Your creation or your raising is only like a single soul. Surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing. **29**Do *y*ou not see that Allah makes the night to pass into the day, and He makes the day to pass into the night, and He has made the sun and the moon subservient (to you) — each pursues its course till an appointed time — and that Allah is Aware of what you do? **30**This is because Allah is the Truth, and what they call upon besides Him is falsehood, and that Allah is the High, the Great.

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a **(20)** The words are meant as well for Muslims. So long as they adhered to the *Book giving light* they continued to advance in the world, and they will again lead the world when they place the *Book giving light* in the forefront.

b **(27)** It is noteworthy that a man who himself could not use the pen and who lived in a country where pen and ink were scarce, expresses such an idea of the abundance of pens and ink. While containing a prophetic allusion to the abundant use of pen and ink in the world, the words are expressive of the unimaginable vastness of the Creation of God, for everything created is a word of God in the sense that it is created by Divine commandment.

Section 4: **The Doom comes**

31 Do *y*ou not see that the ships glide on the sea by Allah's grace, that He may show you of His signs? Surely there are signs in this for every patient, grateful one.[a] **32**And when a wave like awnings covers them, they call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience. But when He brings them safe to land, some of them follow the middle course. And none denies Our signs but every perfidious, ungrateful one.

33 O people, keep your duty to your Lord and dread the day when no father can avail his son in the least, nor will the child avail his father. Surely the promise of Allah is true, so do not let this world's life deceive you, nor let the arch-deceiver deceive you about Allah.[b] **34**Surely Allah is He with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour, and He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the wombs. And no one knows what he will earn tomorrow. And no one knows in what land he will die.[c] Surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.

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a **(31)** The *signs for the patient, grateful one* no doubt contain a hint to the suffering but grateful Muslims, and to their being made a great nation.

b **(33)** Gharūr, which literally means *the great deceiver,* stands for the *devil*.

c **(34)** By *the Hour* is meant *the hour* of the fulfilment of prophecy and of the downfall of the opponents, as well as the Resurrection. The wonderful disclosure of knowledge relating to the future could not be made by a mere mortal, who cannot foretell the ordinary events of life happening before his eyes day and night. But there may also be a deeper reference to the transformation that was to be brought about in Arabia: the sending down of rain signifying the quickening of the spiritually dead; those that were in the wombs were ordained to be Muslims; the opponents of today would prove the supporters of tomorrow; and those who turned the Muslims out of their houses would themselves meet death, when away from their habitations, even as they did when they attacked Madinah to crush the Muslims.

Chapter 32

Al-Sajdah Adoration

The name of this chapter is taken from v. 15 where the faithful are spoken of as falling down in adoration, or prostrating, when the Divine messages are recited to them. The chapter foretells the establishment of Islam, the punishment for the opponents in this very life and the raising of the dead earth to life. Chapters 29 to 32 form one group revealed near the close of the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Islam will be established**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 I, Allah, am the Best Knower.[a] **2**The revelation of the Book, in which there is no doubt, is from the Lord of the worlds. **3**Or do they say: He has forged it? No, it is the Truth from *y*our Lord that *y*ou may warn a people to whom no warner has come before *y*ou that they may walk aright.[b]

4 Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six periods, and He is established on the Throne of Power. You have not besides Him a guardian or an intercessor. Will you not then be mindful? **5**He orders the Affair from the heaven to the earth; then it will ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is a thousand years as you count.[c] **6**Such is the

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a **(1)** For explanation, see 2:1 footnote.

b **(3)** Makkah had not seen a prophet before the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who was the only Prophet raised among the descendants of Ishmael.

c **(5)** *Al-Amr* or *the Affair* is the Affair of Islam, and its ordering or regulation from heaven to earth means that it comes from heaven and will be established firmly on earth. Then we are told that it will ascend to God in a day, the measure of which is a thousand years according to human reckoning, which means that it will receive a setback for a thousand years. As regards the period of its firmness, we are told by the Holy Prophet Muhammad that it will retain its purity for three centuries: "The best of the generations is my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them, then after them will come people who will pride themselves in abundance of wealth and love plumpness" (Tirmidhi, 33:45, hadith 2221). That there is a prophecy here is shown by the next verse, which

Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Mighty, the Merciful, **7**Who made beautiful everything that He created, and He began the creation of man from dust.[a] **8**Then He made his progeny of an extract, of worthless seeming water. **9**Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit,[b] and gave you ears and eyes and hearts; little thanks you give!

10 And they say: When we are lost in the earth, shall we then be in a new creation? Indeed, they are disbelievers in the meeting with their Lord. **11**Say: The angel of death, who is given charge of you, will cause you to die, then to your Lord you will be returned.

Section 2: **Believers and disbelievers — a comparison**

12 And if only *y*ou could see when the guilty hang their heads before their Lord: Our Lord, we have seen and heard, so send us back, we will do good; we are (now) certain. **13**And if We had pleased, We could have given every soul its guidance, but the word from Me was just: I will certainly fill hell with jinn and people, all together.[c] **14**So taste, because you forgot the meeting of this Day

says, *Such is the Knower of the unseen and the seen*. This prophecy was made known at a time when there was not the least indication that Islam would be established in the earth. At that time the Prophet was told that Islam would be firmly established at first. That the cause would go on advancing for three centuries is made clear by the Prophet's saying. After that the cause of Islam would be chequered and it would have its setbacks, which would continue for a thousand years. The limitation of the period of chequering shows clearly that, after that, the advancement of Islam will again be unhampered.

a **(7)** See 23:12–14, where the various stages through which man passes in his creation are spoken of in detail. The wonderful beauty of creation from the atom to the most brilliant star in the realm of matter, and from the smallest ant to the most developed form of life in man, could not have been known to an Arabian of the 7th century who could neither read nor write, yet he sees, as stated here, that everything that was created was beautiful. This beauty in creation undoubtedly emanated from the same Source, from the Great Creator Who, according to the Quran, has the "most beautiful names" (17:110, 20:8, 59:24).

b **(9)** This verse shows that the spirit of God is breathed into every human being. This points to a mystical relation between human nature and Divine nature. It is due to this spirit Divine that he rules the creation and it is due to the same Divine spirit in him that he receives a new life after death — a life in which he lives in God and with God — the meeting with God or *liqā Allāh*, as it is called in v. 10.

c **(13)** God's word, as the Quran says so often, is that the right way has been

of yours; surely We forsake you; and taste the abiding punishment for what you did.

15 Only they believe in Our messages who, when they are reminded of them, fall down prostrate and celebrate the praise of their Lord, and they are not proud. **16**They forsake (their) beds, calling upon their Lord in fear and in hope, and spend (on good works) out of what We have given them.[a] **17**So no soul knows what joy of the eyes is hidden for them: a reward for what they did.[b]

18 Is he then, who is a believer, like him who is a transgressor? They are not equal. **19**As for those who believe and do good deeds, for them are Gardens, a refuge — an entertainment for what they did. **20**And as for those who transgress, their refuge is the Fire. Whenever they desire to go forth from it, they are brought back into it, and it is said to them: Taste the punishment of the Fire, which you called a lie. **21**And certainly We will make them taste the nearer punishment before the greater punishment, that perhaps they may turn.[c] **22**And who is more unjust than he who is reminded of the

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pointed out to man but he is given the choice to accept or reject it, and that those who rejected that word and did not forsake evil ways would go to hell. The reference in *if We had pleased* is to the fact that man is not compelled to submit to the Divine law. His superiority lies in the fact that he has been given a choice. If he exercises that choice rightly, he attains to eminence; if he exercises it wrongly, he must taste the evil consequences of his deeds.

a **(16)** The literal significance of the original words for *they forsake* is *their sides draw away from*, showing that they are restless in their beds. These are the foundations of the culture of Islam, passing part of the night in remembering Allah, and passing the day in earning wealth to spend in the way of Allah for the benefit of humanity.

b **(17)** This is a true description of what the blessings of paradise are: *No soul knows what joy of the eyes is hidden for them*. These blessings are hidden from the physical eye of man, and therefore their description in words which convey an idea of the blessings of this life is metaphorical. Words cannot reveal to us the real nature of those blessings. The Holy Prophet's own comment on these words shows this, for he is reported to have said: "Allah says, I have prepared for My righteous servants that which no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and which the heart of man cannot conceive" (Bukhari, 59:8, hadith 3244).

c **(21)** By the *nearer* punishment is meant the earthly punishment, which might serve as a warning against the greater punishment of the Hereafter. The opponents of Truth are thus told that they must taste a punishment in this life, too, and the description of it given in the previous verse — *whenever they desire to go forth from it, they are brought back into it* — manifestly applies to modern

messages of his Lord, then he turns away from them? Surely We exact retribution from the guilty.

Section 3: **Dead earth will receive life**

23 And We indeed gave Moses the Book — so do not doubt the meeting with Him — and We made it a guide for the Children of Israel.[a] **24**And We made from among them leaders to guide by Our command when they were patient. And they were certain of Our messages. **25**Surely *y*our Lord will judge between them on the day of Resurrection in that in which they differed. **26**Is it not clear to them how many of the generations, in whose abodes they go about, We destroyed before them? Surely there are signs in this. Will they not then hear? **27**Do they not see that We drive the water to a land having no vegetation, then We bring forth with it seed-produce, of which their cattle and they themselves eat. Will they not then see?

28 And they say: When will this victory come, if you are truthful?[b] **29**Say: On the day of victory the faith of those who (now) disbelieve will not benefit them, nor will they be given respite. **30**So turn away from them and wait, surely they too are waiting.

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world conditions, when materialism has taken hold of the minds of people. The wars raging in the world are the fire of this life, and, however much the warring nations may desire to get out of them, they are brought back into them.

a **(23)** To bring about the meeting with God — to make humans live in God — is the real aim of religion, and here it is pointed out that to make people attain this object a Book was given to Moses for the Israelites, as a Book is now given for the whole world. This object will be attained despite opposition, which will be brought to naught, as made clear in v. 26.

b **(28)** The question makes it clear that the above verses speak of the triumph of Islam over all opposition, then and now, in metaphorical language; hence they ask, when will the victory come? The driving of the water to a dead land, *a land having no vegetation*, is a clear hint that the dead earth will receive life.

Chapter 33

Al-Aḥzāb The Allies

By the *Allies* are meant the Quraish, allied with other idolatrous tribes and tribes of the Jews, who besieged Madinah in 4 A.H. That battle is known as the Battle of the Allies, and this chapter deals with it. It begins by referring to the spiritual relationship of the Holy Prophet Muhammad with the faithful, and then covers the topic of the attack of the Allies on the Muslims. It goes on to deal with the Holy Prophet's domestic life and shows that, despite becoming a ruler of his people, he and his wives lived in the utmost simplicity and he told his wives that to stay with him they would have to give up worldly comforts. Then it refutes some objections relating to his domestic life and teaches Muslims certain rules of conduct in domestic relations. Finally, it denounces those who spread evil reports against innocent persons and teaches Muslims to avoid such behaviour. Most of this chapter was revealed in 4 A.H. while some verses were revealed later, up to 7 A.H.

Section 1: **Spiritual and physical relationship**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O Prophet, keep *y*our duty to Allah and do not obey the disbelievers and the hypocrites.[a] Surely Allah is ever Knowing, Wise; **2**and follow what is revealed to *y*ou from *y*our Lord. Surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do; **3**and trust in Allah. And Allah is enough as having charge (of affairs).

4 Allah has not made for any man two hearts within him;[b] nor has He made your wives whom you desert by *Ẓihār,* your mothers,

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a **(1)** The chapter was revealed at a time when the powerful and combined forces of the Arabian tribes threatened Madinah from without and the hypocrites and the Jews assisted them from within to crush the Muslims. It was necessary at such a critical time that the Muslims, who are really addressed here through the Prophet, should not in any way be compliant to their deadly enemies. Or, the meaning is that the Holy Prophet should not be troubled by his critics, for their object was only to carp, and one course of action was as well calculated to give them occasion for carping as another.

b **(4-1)** This passage does not relate to what follows but sums up what is said in the previous verse. The Prophet is there told not to be compliant to the disbelievers and the hypocrites, but to trust in Allah alone, because the same heart cannot simultaneously entertain love for Allah and love for His enemies.

nor has He made those whom you assert (to be your sons) your sons. These are the words of your mouths. And Allah speaks the truth and He shows the way.[a] **5**Call them by (the names of) their fathers; this is more equitable with Allah; but if you do not know their fathers, then they are your brethren in faith and your friends. And there is no blame on you in that about which you make a mistake, but (you are answerable for) what your hearts intend. And Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. **6**The Prophet is closer to the faithful than their own selves, and his wives are (as) their mothers.[b] And the possessors of relationship are closer to one another in the ordinance of Allah than (other) believers, and those who fled (their homes), except that you do some good to your friends.[c] This is written in the Book.

7 And when We took a covenant from the prophets and from *y*ou, and from Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus, son of Mary, and We took from them a solemn covenant,[d] **8**that He may

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a **(4-2)** This passage abolishes two ignorant customs of pre-Islamic times. The first of these was called *ẓihār,* which consisted in a man saying to his wife *you are to me as the back of my mother.* No sooner were the words pronounced than the relation between husband and wife ended as by a divorce, but the woman was not at liberty to leave the husband's house and marry elsewhere. She remained in the same house, as a deserted wife. The other custom was that of regarding the adopted son as if he were a real son. This passage abolishes both customs on the same ground; a wife cannot be a real mother, nor a stranger a real son. The subject of *ẓihār* is fully discussed in the first section of chapter 58.

b **(6-1)** The Prophet was indeed much more than a father to the believers. He had raised them to the dignity of manhood from a state of savagery, consequently the tie of love which united them to him was stronger than the ordinary ties of love and friendship. The statement that his wives are their mothers has reference to spiritual relationship, because they were helpful in bringing up the faithful spiritually; see v. 33 and 34.

c **(6-2)** When the Muslims first came to Madinah, a brotherhood was established between those who fled and the helpers, one of the former becoming a brother of one of the latter, and each of the two thus united was entitled to a share of inheritance on the death of the other, according to an old Arab custom. The passage abolishes this custom, maintaining only the brotherhood of Islam in a wider sense, and allowing inheritance only to actual relatives. But a Muslim could assist his brother in Islam by a gift or by making a will in his favour. This is the significance of the words *except that you do some good to your friends*.

d **(7)** The covenant referred to here may be in relation to the delivery of the message with which the prophets are entrusted. But see 3:81, which speaks of a

question the truthful of their truth, and He has prepared for the disbelievers a painful punishment.

Section 2: **The Allies' attack on Madinah**

9 O you who believe, call to mind the favour of Allah to you when armies came against you,[a] so We sent against them a strong wind and forces that you did not see.[b] And Allah is ever Seer of what you do. **10**When they came upon you from above you and from below you,[c] and when the eyes turned dull and the hearts rose up to the throats, and you began to think diverse thoughts about Allah.[d] **11**There were the believers tried and they were shaken with a severe shaking.

12 And when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts was a disease began to say: Allah and His Messenger promised us (victory) only to deceive.[e] **13**And when a group of them said:

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covenant with the prophets with regard to the advent of the Holy Prophet. The covenant spoken of as having been made with the Holy Prophet evidently refers to the Prophet's verifying all previous revelation. Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus are specially mentioned by name on account of their importance.

a **(9-1)** The events narrated here relate to the siege of Madinah by the combined forces of the Quraish and their allies, aided by the Jewish tribe of the Bani Nadir and the Bani Quraizah, the latter of whom had made a treaty of alliance with the Muslims — the entire forces numbering from ten to twenty thousand according to different versions, while the Muslims were only about thirteen or fourteen hundred. The Prophet decided to remain within the town and a ditch was dug as a protective measure against the onrush of the powerful force. The battle continued for several days, the enemy eventually taking to flight on a stormy night without being able to inflict any loss upon the Muslims.

b **(9-2)** A great hurricane caused the enemy to flee. The forces which could not be seen were the angelic hosts which disheartened the enemy. The angelic assistance is promised in 3:125.

c **(10-1)** One allied tribe pitched on the east side of the town, on the higher part of the valley, and the Quraish on the west side, on the lower part.

d **(10-2)** The description of the eyes and the hearts indicates the natural Muslim fear. The diverse thoughts signify the fears of the weak-hearted and the hypocrites that Allah's promise would not prove true and that the enemy would destroy them. As regards the thoughts of the faithful, see v. 22.

e **(12)** There was an unmistakable promise of victory, but the circumstances were decidedly against the fulfilment of that promise, and hence the weak-hearted said that the promise of victory was given only to deceive them.

People of Yathrib,[a] you cannot make a stand, so go back.[b] And a party of them asked permission of the Prophet, saying, Our houses are exposed. And they were not exposed. They only desired to run away. **14**And if an entry were made upon them from the outlying parts of it, then they were asked to wage war (against the Muslims), they would certainly have done it, and they would not have stayed in it but a little while.[c] **15**And they had indeed made a covenant with Allah before, (that) they would not turn (their) backs. And a covenant with Allah must be answered for.

16 Say: Running away will not benefit you, if you run away from death or slaughter, and then you will not be allowed to enjoy yourselves but a little. **17**Say: Who is it that can protect you from Allah, if He intends harm for you or He intends to show you mercy? And they will not find for themselves a guardian or a helper besides Allah. **18**Allah indeed knows those among you who hinder others and those who say to their brethren, Come to us. And they do not come to the fight but a little, **19**being miserly with regard to you. But when fear comes, *y*ou will see them looking to *y*ou, their eyes rolling like one fainting because of death. But when fear is gone they strike you with sharp tongues, being greedy for wealth. These have not believed, so Allah makes their deeds fruitless. And that is easy for Allah. **20**They think the allies are not gone, and if the allies should come (again), they would wish to be in the deserts with the dwellers of the desert, asking for news about you. And if they were among you, they would not fight but a little.

Section 3: **Allies' flight**

21 Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the Last Day, and

***a* (13-1)** *Yathrib* was the name by which Madinah was known before the Prophet's flight to that city. On the Prophet's flight there, it received the name of *Madīnat al-Nabī* or the City of the Prophet, or simply Madinah.

***b* (13-2)** That is, go back to idolatry to save your lives, or make a retreat and return to your houses.

***c* (14)** These verses describe the condition of the hypocrites, who advanced excuses for not fighting against the opponents of the Muslims. If an enemy had entered into the city from another side and invited them to join hands with him to fight against the Muslims, they would have been ready to fight. The concluding words show that they would have even left Madinah to attack the Muslims and would not then have cared for the protection of their houses.

remembers Allah much.[a] **22**And when the believers saw the allies, they said: This is what Allah and His Messenger promised us, and Allah and His Messenger spoke the truth. And it only added to their faith and submission.[b] **23**Among the believers are men who are true to the covenant they made with Allah; so some of them have accomplished their vow, and some of them yet wait, and they have not changed in the least — **24**that Allah may reward the truthful for their truth, and punish the hypocrites, if He please, or turn to them (mercifully).[c] Surely Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

25 And Allah turned back the disbelievers in their rage — they gained no advantage. And Allah was sufficient for the believers in fighting. And Allah is ever Strong, Mighty. **26**And He drove down those of the People of the Book who backed them from their fortresses and He cast awe into their hearts; some you killed and you took captive some.[d] **27**And He made you heirs to their land and

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a **(21)** This verse states that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the best exemplar and the highest model of virtue for the faithful under all circumstances. He was a general, soldier, lawmaker, judge, husband and father. He punished tyrants for wrongs they had inflicted on innocent persons, forgave his persecuting enemies after overcoming them, and overlooked the faults of his followers. Hence he was an excellent *exemplar* and a *perfect model* in all walks of life, and he not only gave practical rules of guidance, but gave by his life a practical illustration of all those rules.

The occasion on which his being an exemplar for the faithful is pointed out is one on which he showed the greatest firmness in utmost danger, confidence in Divine assistance, and steadfastness in the hardest trials, and the believers are told that they must not lose heart, but follow the example of the Holy Prophet.

b **(22)** The reference here is to the Divine promise that a time would come when the combined forces of Arabia would be put to flight. This promise was given long before, at a time when the Holy Prophet and his few followers were being severely persecuted at Makkah. So when the combined forces attacked Madinah, the words of the prophecy were in the heart of every true Muslim. They rejoiced because they were certain that the combined forces of the enemy would be put to flight. It was only the hypocrites who had misgivings.

c **(24)** It is clearly stated here, as also in v. 17, that all the hypocrites would not be punished, but that Allah would be merciful to them, punishing only such as deserved to be punished. Thus it happened that most of them became afterwards sincere converts to Islam.

d **(26)** The Jewish tribe of Bani Quraizah were in alliance with the Holy Prophet, and when the enemy laid siege to Madinah they should have repelled the attack. Instead of this they sided with the invading army. When the enemy army took to flight and the Quraizah returned to their fortress, it was besieged by

their dwellings and their property, and (to) a land which you have not yet trodden. And Allah is ever Powerful over all things.[a]

Section 4: **Prophet's domestic simplicity**

28 O Prophet, say to *y*our wives: If you desire this world's life and its adornment, come, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart in a gracious manner.[b] **29**And if you desire Allah and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, then surely Allah has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward. **30**O wives of the Prophet, whoever of you is guilty of manifestly improper conduct, the punishment will be doubled for her. And this is easy for Allah.[c]

31 And whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Messenger and does good, We shall give her a double reward, and We have

the Holy Prophet. They surrendered by stipulating the condition that they would submit to the judgment of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, formerly their ally. The reference here is to the punishment awarded by him, in accordance with the Jewish law in Deuteronomy, 20:12–14.

a **(27)** The *land which you have not yet trodden* refers to the foreign lands which are here promised to the Muslims and which they conquered later.

b **(28)** Muslims were now growing powerful and wealthier. It was natural, in the circumstances, that the wives of the Prophet should desire to be furnished with better necessities of life than they had previously enjoyed. But just at this time we find a revelation enjoining the strictest simplicity upon them. If the Prophet had allowed his wives to share in the general prosperity of the community, there could not have been the least objection. But he received a revelation which deprived him and those most nearly related to him of those material benefits which others could easily acquire. The splendours of this world were not forbidden to any Muslim, but such transitory vanities were not to be admitted into the household of God's Prophet. As he possessed the means, his wives would be allowed to depart with rich and ample gifts, if such was their desire. This passage also shows that the object of the Prophet's marriages was not sensual enjoyment, for he would not have been ready to sacrifice the ease and comforts attendant upon mere carnal desire, and retain the simplicity enjoined upon his household.

c **(30)** Not only are the Prophet's wives denied the comforts of life which were available to other Muslim women, but any unseemly conduct on their part brought double the ordinary punishment. Could this be the work of an impostor? In their case the punishment is increased because, being in the Prophet's house, they had a better chance to be guided aright and to pass their lives in the greatest purity. It should be noted that there is no actual occurrence of the least indecency on the part of any of the Prophet's wives.

prepared for her an honourable sustenance.[a] **32**O wives of the Prophet, you are not like any other women. If you would keep your duty, do not be soft in speech, in case he in whose heart is a disease yearn; and speak a word of goodness.[b] **33**And stay in your houses and do not display (your beauty) like the displaying of the earlier (days of) ignorance; and keep up prayer, and give the due charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only desires to take away uncleanness from you, O people of the household, and to purify you a (thorough) purifying.[c] **34**And remember what is recited in your houses of the messages of Allah and the Wisdom.[d] Surely Allah is ever Knower of subtleties, Aware.

Section 5: **Prophet's marriage with Zainab**

35 Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful

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***a* (31)** Double reward means only greater reward, as the words *honourable sustenance* show. The greater reward is due to their having denied themselves the ordinary comforts of life by remaining in the Prophet's house.

***b* (32)** The wives of the Prophet are here told that they were not like other women, as they had to come in contact with large numbers of people, who would come to them to learn the treasures of wisdom which they received from the Prophet. An allusion to this is contained in the words: *and speak a word of goodness*. As a safeguard against possible inclination of the heart to evil thoughts, they are told not to indulge in soft and amorous conversation with the opposite sex. It is really a rule of life for all Muslim women, and promotes purity of heart and chastity in the relations between the sexes.

***c* (33)** The means of purification are suggested in the preceding text: to observe the utmost simplicity of life, to avoid every indecency, and not to display their beauty to others. The uncleanness which Allah will thus take away is the uncleanness of the desire for worldly riches. As the Prophet himself was an exemplar to the faithful, so was his household to be an example of simplicity and purity to Muslim women; hence they are called *mothers of the faithful*; see v. 6.

Not only did the wives of the Prophet retain the utmost simplicity of life in his lifetime, but even after his death, when the Muslims grew a very wealthy nation and big stipends were paid to the Prophet's wives, they did not allow wealth to accumulate in their houses but distributed it to deserving people. Of Aishah especially it is related that she was so generous in giving away what came to her that she would sometimes be left without the means for an evening meal.

***d* (34)** The wives of the Prophet were not only to serve as models of virtue to the faithful, men as well as women, but they were also required to teach the precepts of religion to the faithful. Hence they are told that they must remember not only the injunctions of the Quran — the messages of Allah — but also the wisdom which the Prophet taught by his practice and word, i.e., the *Sunnah*.

women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the charitable men and the charitable women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their (own) chastity and the women who guard, and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember — Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward.[a]

36 And it does not befit a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided an affair, to exercise a choice in their matter. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he surely strays off to manifest error.[b] **37**And when *y*ou said to him to whom Allah had shown favour and to whom *y*ou had shown a favour: (Zaid) Keep *y*our wife to *y*ourself and keep *y*our duty to Allah;[c] and *y*ou concealed in *y*our heart what Allah would bring to light, and *y*ou feared people, while Allah has a greater right that *y*ou should fear Him. So when Zaid dissolved her marriage-tie, We gave her to *y*ou as a wife, so that there should be no difficulty for the believers about the wives of their adopted sons, when they have dissolved their (wives') marriage-tie.[d] And Allah's command is ever performed.

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a **(35)** This verse repeats ten times that women can attain every good quality to which men can have access and settles it conclusively that according to the Quran women stand on the same spiritual level as men.

b **(36)** This refers to the marriage of Zainab, first cousin of the Holy Prophet through his paternal aunt, with Zaid, his freed slave and adopted son. Zainab and her relations wished for her marriage to the Holy Prophet. But he insisted that she marry Zaid. In deference to his wishes, she accepted marriage with Zaid.

c **(37-1)** The marriage was not happy and Zaid expressed a desire to the Holy Prophet of divorcing Zainab. The news was grieving for the Prophet, for it was he who had insisted upon the marriage, and he therefore advised Zaid not to divorce her. According to one interpretation, the subsequent words "and you concealed in your heart" to "Allah has a greater right that you should fear Him" are a continuation of the Holy Prophet's advice to Zaid not to divorce Zainab. (*Editor's Note:* In this interpretation, *"you feared people"* is also said to refer to Zaid's fear that, as the social standing of Zainab was much higher than his own, people would think he was not giving Zainab sufficient respect.)

d **(37-2)** After Zainab was divorced the Holy Prophet took her in marriage, that being the wish of the lady and her relatives before her marriage to Zaid, and the Prophet was, now that the marriage arranged by him proved unsuccessful, morally bound to accept their wishes. Moreover, the Quran had declared against an adopted son being regarded as if he were a real son, and now there was an opportunity where the Holy Prophet could deal a deathblow to that custom. This reason is plainly given in the second part of the verse: *so that there should be no*

38 There is no harm for the Prophet in what Allah has ordained for him. Such has been the way of Allah with those who have gone before. And the command of Allah is a decree that is made absolute — **39**those who deliver the messages of Allah and fear Him, and fear none but Allah. And Allah is sufficient to take account. **40**Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things.[a]

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difficulty for the believers about the wives of their adopted sons. The Quran does not give any other reason for the marriage.

There is a baseless story that the Prophet, having seen Zainab by chance through a half-open door, was fascinated by her beauty, and that Zaid, having come to know of this, divorced her, and then she became the Prophet's wife. That this story is absurd is shown by the admitted facts that the Holy Prophet knew her very well before her marriage to Zaid, that he himself insisted on her marrying Zaid despite she and her relatives being desirous of her marriage with the Holy Prophet, and that he strongly advised Zaid not to divorce her.

a **(40)** The word *khātam* means *a seal* or *the last part* or *portion* of a thing, the latter being the primary significance of the word *khātim*. The words *khātam al-qaum* always means *the last of the people — ākhiru-hum*. Though the Holy Prophet was admittedly the last of the prophets, and even history shows that no prophet appeared after him in the world, yet the Quran has adopted the word *khātam* and not *khātim,* because a deeper significance is carried in the phrase *Seal of the prophets* than mere *finality*. It indicates *finality* combined with *perfection of prophethood*, along with *a continuance* among his followers of certain *blessings of prophethood*. He is the *Seal of the prophets* because with him the *object of prophethood, the manifestation of Divine will in Laws which should guide humanity, was finally accomplished in the revelation of a perfect law in the Holy Quran*, and he is also the *Seal of the prophets* because *certain favours bestowed on prophets were forever to continue among his followers*. The office of the prophet was only necessary to guide people, either by giving them a law or by removing the imperfections of a previously existing law, or by giving certain new directions to meet the requirements of the time or place. Hence prophets were constantly raised. But through the Holy Prophet a perfect law was given, suiting the requirements of all ages and all countries, and this law was guarded against all corruption, and the office of the prophet was therefore no more required. But this did not mean that the Divine favours bestowed on Allah's chosen servants were to be denied to the chosen ones among the Muslims. The highest of these favours is Divine inspiration, and it is recognized by Islam that the Divine Being speaks to His chosen ones now as He spoke in the past, but such people are not *prophets* in the real sense of the word. According to a most reliable hadith, the Prophet said "there will be in my community", i.e., among the Muslims, "men who will be spoken to (by God), though they will not be prophets" (Bukhari, 62:6, hadith 3689). According to another version of the same hadith, such people are given the name *muḥaddath* (Bukhari, as above).

Section 6: **The Prophet's marriages**

41 O you who believe, remember Allah with much remembrance, **42**and glorify Him morning and evening. **43**He it is Who sends blessings on you, and (so do) His angels, that He may bring you forth out of darkness into light. And He is ever Merciful to the believers.[a] **44**Their greeting on the day they meet Him will be, Peace! And He has prepared for them an honourable reward.

45 O Prophet, surely We have sent *y*ou as a witness, and a bearer of good news and a warner, **46**and as an inviter to Allah by His permission, and as a light-giving sun.[b] **47**And give the believers the good news that they will have great grace from Allah. **48**And do not obey the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and disregard their annoying talk,[c] and rely on Allah. And Allah is sufficient as having charge of affairs.

There is also a saying of the Holy Prophet: "Nothing has remained of prophethood except *mubashshārāt* (i.e., *good news*)." And being asked what was meant by *mubashshārāt*, or *good news*, he said: "True visions" (Bukhari, 91:5, hadith 6990). According to another hadith: "The vision of the believer is one of the forty-six parts of prophethood" (Bukhari, 91:4, hadith 6987–6989). Prophethood itself has gone, but one of its blessings remains, and will exist forever among the followers of the Holy Prophet.

***a* (43)** This section deals with the marriages of the Holy Prophet and fittingly opens with a statement showing how he had made God the greatest force in the lives of a people who had never known God. Again it was by means of the transformation wrought by him that his companions were led out of the darkness of ignorance. How could it be that the man who purified others was himself impure? Could a sensual man, a slave of his passions, turn a nation of idolatrous and ignorant men into a godly people? This argument is then further expanded.

***b* (46)** The words imply that one who could give light to others and raise them from the depth of vice and immorality to the height of purity and perfection could not himself be in the darkness of impurity. The Prophet is here spoken of first as one *bearing witness* to lost humanity, to people who had lost all idea of God-consciousness, that there is a God. More than that, he was *a bearer of good news* to humanity that God still remembered mankind, and that He had sent His Prophet to make this fallen humanity rise to spiritual eminence, but he was also *a warner*, and told them that, if they persisted in their evil ways, they would suffer evil consequences; thus he was *an Inviter* to Allah and the *Sun of righteousness*.

***c* (48)** In the mention of *annoying talk* there is a clear reference to the carpings of his petty-minded critics, who try to misrepresent the greatest source of righteousness which the world has ever witnessed, as an evil. The Prophet is told to disregard this annoying talk, as the time would come when the question would be asked: how is it that the Prophet illumined the world and opened the

49 O you who believe, when you marry believing women, then divorce them before you touch them, you have in their case no term which you should reckon. But make provision for them and let them go in a gracious manner. **50**O Prophet, We have made lawful to *y*ou *y*our wives whom *y*ou have given their dowries,[a] and those whom *y*our right hand possesses, out of those whom Allah has given *y*ou as prisoners of war, and the daughters of *y*our paternal uncle and the daughters of *y*our paternal aunts, and the daughters of *y*our maternal uncle and the daughters of *y*our maternal aunts who migrated with *y*ou; and a believing woman, if she gives herself to the Prophet, if the Prophet desires to marry her. (It is) especially for *y*ou, not for the believers [b] — We know what We have ordained for

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flood-gates of light to a benighted world, if it was darkness that reigned supreme in his own mind? (*Editor's Note:* "Disregard their annoying talk" also shows that a Muslim must not become inflamed by verbal abuse of his religion, and if his reply has no effect on the abuser then he should simply ignore the hurtful comments.)

***a* (50-1)** This revelation came after 4:3, which limits the number of wives a man can take under exceptional circumstances to four. The Prophet was, however, told that he should not divorce the excess number for this reason.

The marriages of the Holy Prophet have furnished his critics with the chief implement of attack on him. Therefore we give some details about them below.

(1) Up to the age of 25, the Holy Prophet lived a celibate life, a life of transcendent purity among a people who prided themselves on loose sexual relations. (2) At the age of 25, he married a widow, Khadijah, who was 40 years old, and passed all the years of his youth and manhood with her as his only wife till she passed away when he reached the age of 50. Then while still at Makkah he married Saudah, a widow of advanced age. He also married Aishah, his only virgin wife, while still at Makkah, but her marriage was consummated five years afterwards in the 2nd year of the *Hijra*. (3) From the age of 54 to 60, after the emigration to Madinah, he contracted several marriages at the same time. The women he married were mostly widows of his followers who had been killed in battle or otherwise died. Besides these widows whom it fell to his lot to take under his protection, the Prophet took three widows of his enemies in marriage, and in each case this step led to the union and pacification of a whole tribe. The marriage with Zainab has already been mentioned; she was a divorced woman. (4) The last period was when war came to an end; a reference to this is contained in v. 52: "It is not allowed to you to take wives after this". Thus it will be seen that all these marriages of the Prophet were due either to feelings of compassion for the widows of his faithful followers or to put a stop to bloodshed and ensure union with some tribe.

***b* (50-2)** The Prophet was specially allowed to retain all his wives when the number allowed was brought down to four in the case of other believers. This was the only privilege allowed to the Prophet and it is to this that the words, *especially for you*, refer.

them concerning their wives and those whom their right hands possess in order that no blame may attach to *y*ou. And Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. **51** *Y*ou may put off (by divorce) whom *y*ou please of them, and take to *y*ourself whom *y*ou please. And whom *y*ou desire of those whom *y*ou had separated provisionally, no blame attaches to *y*ou. This is most proper so that they may be comforted and they may not grieve, and that they should be pleased, all of them, with what *y*ou give them.[a] And Allah knows what is in your hearts. And Allah is ever Knowing, Forbearing. **52** It is not allowed to *y*ou to take wives after this, nor to change them for other wives,[b] though their beauty be pleasing to *y*ou, except those whom *y*our right hand (already) possesses.[c] And Allah is ever Watchful over all things.

Section 7: **Rules of conduct in domestic relations**

53 O you who believe, do not enter the houses of the Prophet unless permission is given to you for a meal, not waiting for its cooking to be finished — but when you are invited, enter, and when you have taken food, disperse — not seeking to listen to talk. Surely this gives the Prophet trouble, but he forbears from you, and Allah does not forbear from the truth. And when you ask of them any goods, ask of them from behind a curtain. This is purer for your hearts and their hearts.[d] And it is not fitting for you to give trouble

***a* (51)** This verse must be read along with verses 28 and 29, where a choice is given to the Prophet's wives to remain with him or to depart. A similar choice is given here to the Prophet. And when his wives preferred to lead simple lives with him rather than seek worldly goods by leaving him, the Prophet was no less considerate for their feelings; for despite the choice given to him to retain such of his wives as he liked, he did not exercise this choice to the disadvantage of anyone of them, but retained them all, as they had chosen to remain with him. A reference is, indeed, contained to verses 28 and 29 in the words *that they should be pleased, all of them, with what you give them*, which indicate that this was altogether a new arrangement in which both parties were given free choice and both sacrificed all other considerations to the sanctity of the marriage-tie.

***b* (52-1)** When the Prophet's wives chose to remain with him, the limitation was placed upon the Holy Prophet that he should not take any other wife nor should he divorce anyone of those who had chosen to remain with him.

***c* (52-2)** By *those whom your right hand possesses* are indicated the wives of the Prophet whom he had lawfully married.

***d* (53-1)** Any rule of conduct to be observed in relation to the Holy Prophet

to the Messenger of Allah, nor to marry his wives after him ever.[a] Surely this is grievous in the sight of Allah. **54**If you do a thing openly or do it in secret, then surely Allah is ever Knower of all things.

55 There is no blame on them in respect of their fathers, nor their sons, nor their brothers, nor their brothers' sons, nor their sisters' sons, nor their own women, nor of what their right hands possess — and (O you women) keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is ever Witness over all things. **56**Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet. O you who believe, call for blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation.[b] **57**Surely those who malign Allah and His Messenger,[c] Allah has cursed them in this world and the Hereafter, and He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment. **58**And those who malign believing men and believing women undeservedly, they bear the guilt of slander and manifest sin.

Section 8: **Those who spread evil reports**

59 O Prophet, tell *y*our wives and *y*our daughters and the women of believers to let down upon them their over-garments.

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is really a rule that must be observed in all social relations. The Quran teaches not only high morals, but also good manners, for it is meant for everyone. In this verse it disparages the custom of giving trouble to the owner of a house who invites his friends to a dinner by coming before the appointed time or staying after dinner to indulge in idle talk. This is a rule which the Muslims were desired to observe towards one another as well as towards the Holy Prophet.

***a* (53-2)** The respect due to the Prophet is alone a sufficient reason for the injunction, but a little consideration will show that the absence of the injunction would have led to difficulties. One of the objects which the Prophet's marriages served was the faithful communication of incidents that play an important part in the life of a man, but whose knowledge is only limited to a man's family circle. The remarriage of any of the Prophet's widows would have surely impaired this object to a great degree, as it would have had a possible effect upon the independence of opinion of the lady who entered into marital obligations with another man.

***b* (56)** The invocation of Divine blessings on the Holy Prophet is mentioned in connection with the false imputations against him as regards his marital relations, the implication being that all such imputations would be brought to naught by the blessings which Allah would shower on him, showing that he is pure and holds communion with the Fountainhead of purity.

***c* (57)** The word translated as "malign" is from the root *adha* and it refers here to the false imputations of the disbelievers and the hypocrites against the Holy Prophet. This sense of the word is made clear in the next verse, where the same word is used about the believers, and is explained at the end of the verse as indicating *a false accusation against them*.

This is more proper, so that they may be known, and not be given trouble. And Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.[a] **60**If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease and the agitators in Madinah do not stop, We shall certainly urge *y*ou on against them, then they shall not be *y*our neighbours in it but for a little while — **61**accursed, wherever they are found they will be seized and killed. **62**That was the way of Allah concerning those who have gone before; and *y*ou will find no change in the way of Allah.

63 People ask *y*ou about the Hour. Say: The knowledge of it is only with Allah. And what will make *y*ou comprehend that the Hour may be near?[b] **64**Surely Allah has cursed the disbelievers and prepared for them a burning Fire, **65**to abide in it for a long time; they will find no protector nor helper. **66**On the day when their leaders are turned back into the Fire, they say: If only we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger! **67**And they say: Our Lord, we only obeyed our leaders and our great men, so they led us astray from the path. **68**Our Lord, give them a double punishment and curse them with a great curse.

Section 9: **An exhortation to the faithful**

69 O you who believe, do not be like those who maligned Moses, but Allah cleared him of what they said. And he was worthy of regard with Allah.[c] **70**O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah and speak straight words: **71**He will put your deeds into a right state for you, and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he indeed achieves a mighty success.

72 Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared

a **(59)** The injunction to wear an over-garment is here given with the object that women may not be annoyed and followed by men inclined to evil, who would come to know by this mark of distinction that these were pure and chaste women who would not tolerate insult or ill-treatment.

b **(63)** By the *Hour* is meant the *hour of their doom*, as prophesied in the previous verses.

c **(69)** For a false imputation against Moses by his own people, and even his own sister, see the book of Numbers, ch. 12. As this chapter deals with false imputations, the case of a false imputation against the prophet in whose likeness the Holy Prophet came is cited, and attention is drawn to the fate of those who had taken part in the accusation. The false accusations against the Holy Prophet are all forged by his opponents.

from it, and man has turned unfaithful to it.[a] Surely he is ever unjust, ignorant — [73]that Allah may punish the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women, and the men and the women who set up partners (with Allah), and Allah will turn (mercifully) to the believing men and the believing women. And Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

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a **(72)** The words translated as "unfaithful" to the trust literally mean *bear* the trust. *Not bearing the trust* signifies *paying it back,* and *bearing the trust* means *being unfaithful to it.* The meaning is that nature is true to its laws which bring about its evolution, but man is not true to the laws on which depends his real happiness.

(*Editor's Note:* "Trust" here may be the spirit or soul breathed into the human body by God, as stated in 15:29. It is quite different from the animal life which a human shares with all animals, along with his physical body. All experiences, actions and even thoughts of a human being during his life are imprinted on the soul and they make it into an individual personality called *nafs* by the Quran. This *nafs* is taken away at death, as stated in 39:42, and appears before its Creator (50:21) to account for the way the trust placed in him by God was discharged. This grave responsibility, if properly discharged, gives it scope wider than the earth, higher than the heavens and stronger than the mountains referred to in this verse. This is proved by 59:21 as the revelation of the Quran came to the Holy Prophet Muhammad without his heart crumbling down.)

Chapter 34

Saba' Saba

The title of this chapter is the name of a city (v.15), Saba, in Yaman which was destroyed by a flood. The chapter begins by asserting the truth of the judgment, which takes place not only in the life after death but is witnessed in this life as well. Prosperous nations are destroyed when they fall into evil ways, and this judgment will overtake the Quraish as well. It then prophesies a victory for the Muslims in an encounter with their enemies, whose leaders and followers will blame each other and their deities will be unable to help them. In the end it tells us that truth will prosper and falsehood will vanish before it. Chapters 34 to 39 form one group, belonging most probably to the middle period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Judgment is certain**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Praise be to Allah, Whose is whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and to Him be praise in the Hereafter! And He is the Wise, the Aware. **2**He knows what goes down into the earth and what comes out of it, and what comes down from heaven and what goes up to it. And He is the Merciful, the Forgiving.

3 And those who disbelieve say: The Hour will never come to us. Say: Indeed, by my Lord, the Knower of the unseen, it will certainly come to you! Not an atom's weight escapes Him in the heavens or in the earth, nor is there less than that nor greater, but (all) is in a clear book,[a] **4**that He may reward those who believe and do good. For them is forgiveness and an honourable sustenance. **5**And those who strive hard in opposing Our Messages, for them is a painful punishment of an evil kind.

6 And those who have been given knowledge see that what is revealed to *y*ou from *y*our Lord, is the Truth and it guides into the path of the Mighty, the Praised. **7**And those who disbelieve say: Shall we show you a man who informs you that, when you are scattered the utmost scattering, you will then be in a new creation?

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a **(3)** The verse states the immutable law that every deed is followed by a consequence, and nothing should be looked upon as too small to produce an effect. The two verses that follow are an illustration of this law; good meets with a good reward and evil with an evil punishment.

8Has he forged a lie against Allah or is there madness in him? No, those who do not believe in the Hereafter are in torment and in far error. **9**Do they not see what is before them and what is behind them of the heaven and the earth? If We please, We can make them low in the land or bring down upon them a portion of heaven. Surely there is a sign in this for every servant turning (to Allah).[a]

Section 2: **Favours followed by retribution**

10 And certainly We gave David abundance from Us: O mountains, repeat praises with him,[b] and the birds, and We made iron pliant to him,[c] **11**saying: Make ample (coats of mail), and assign a time to the making of coats of mail, and (O people) do good. Surely I am Seer of what you do.[d] **12**And (We made) the wind (subservient) to Solomon; it made a month's journey in the morning and a month's journey in the evening;[e] and We made a fountain of molten

***a* (9)** This is the ever-recurring argument of the Quran. The disbelievers deny the last Resurrection, the life after death, the sublime principle of the accountability of human actions, which forms the only basis of high morals, and they are told that, as a proof of the truth of the Resurrection, they will be brought low in this very life for standing in the way of the advancement of Truth. It is compared with the coming of a portion from heaven because they would not be able to avert it.

***b* (10-1)** By the mountains repeating praises of Allah, some understand the praising of Allah in the sense in which all inanimate objects are spoken of in the Quran as glorifying God, while others think that the mountains' echoing of David's loud praises is meant. But the mention of birds, the attendants of a victorious army (see 16:79), and iron along with it shows that the reference is to the conquests of David; and the singing of praises by the mountains therefore carries the significance of those residing on mountains yielding to David.

***c* (10-2)** The making of iron pliant to him signifies the extensive use of iron by him in his battles, and so do the coats of mail in the next verse.

***d* (11)** David is enjoined to prepare himself and his army for severe battles; hence the necessity of coats of mail to save life. Some think that the commandment signifies that David should not take anything from the treasury for his own livelihood, and that he should earn his livelihood by an industry, such as the making of coats of mail. According to one interpretation, *assigning a time* indicates that David is commanded not to employ his whole time in such occupations, for the real object is to do good.

***e* (12-1)** See 21:81. The significance is that Solomon's ships were made to traverse a month's journey in a day by favourable winds. For Solomon's navy, see 1 Kings 9:26. But it should be noted that *rīḥ* ("wind") means also *power* or

brass to flow for him.[a] And some of the jinn worked before him by the command of his Lord. And whoever turned aside from Our command from among them, We made him taste of the punishment of burning.[b] **13**They made for him what he pleased, of synagogues and images, and bowls (large) as watering-troughs and fixed cooking-pots.[c] Give thanks, O people of David! And very few of My servants are grateful. **14**But when We decreed death for him, nothing showed them his death but a creature of the earth that ate away his staff. So when it fell down, the jinn saw clearly that, if they had known the unseen, they would not have remained in humiliating torment.[d]

15 Certainly there was a sign for Saba in their abode — two gardens on the right and the left.[e] Eat of the sustenance of your Lord

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dominance or *conquest,* and therefore the meaning may be that Solomon's kingdom was so large that it was a month's journey to the East and a month's journey to the West.

a **(12-2)** See 2 Chronicles, 4:2.

b **(12-3)** These jinn were no other than the strangers whom Solomon subjected to his rule and forced into service. See 2 Chronicles, 2:2–18. Note that the jinn of this verse are the "devils" (*shayāṭīn*) of 38:37 — "(We subjected to Solomon) the devils, every builder and diver" — where the devils are explained by the Quran itself to be no others than the builders and divers whom Solomon had forced into labour.

c **(13)** For the graving of cherubims on the walls, see 2 Chronicles, 3:7; for the casting of oxen, 2 Chronicles, 4:3; for the making of lavers, pots, basins, etc., 2 Chronicles, 4:11, 14.

d **(14)** The reference in *the creature of the earth that ate away his staff* is to his son's weak rule, under whom the kingdom of Solomon went to pieces. It appears that Solomon's successor, Rehoboam, led a life of luxury and ease, and instead of acting on the advice of the older men, he yielded to the pleasure-seeking wishes of his companions (1 Kings 12:13), and it is to his luxurious habits and easy mode of life that the Quran refers when it calls him *a creature of the earth*. The eating away of his staff signifies the disruption of the kingdom. The jinn, as already remarked, mean the rebellious tribes who had been reduced to subjection by Solomon, and who remained in subjection to the Israelites for a time, until the kingdom was shattered. This instance, as well as the one following, contains a warning for the Muslims as to the result of falling into luxury and ease, by which, however, they benefited little; the ultimate fate of the respective kingdoms of the Umayyads and the Abbasides was the same as that of Solomon's kingdom. See also 38:34.

e **(15)** *Saba'* was a city in Yaman, about three days' journey from San'a. Note that it is usual to speak of two gardens, for large cultivated areas were bounded by a garden on each side.

and give thanks to Him. A good land and a Forgiving Lord! **16**But they turned aside, so We sent upon them a violent torrent,[a] and in place of their two gardens We gave them two gardens yielding bitter fruit and (growing) tamarisk and a few lote-trees. **17**With this We recompensed them because they were ungrateful; and We punish none but the ungrateful. **18**And We made, between them and the towns which We had blessed, (other) towns within sight,[b] and We determined the journey between them (to be easy): Travel through them nights and days, secure. **19**But (it was as if) they said: Our Lord, make longer stages between our journeys.[c] And they wronged themselves; so We made them stories and scattered them a total scattering. Surely there are signs in this for every patient, grateful one.

20 And the devil indeed found true his conjecture about them, so they follow him, except a group of the believers. **21**And he has no authority over them, but that We may know him who believes in the Hereafter from him who is in doubt about it. And *y*our Lord is the Preserver of all things.

Section 3: **A victory for the Muslims**

22 Say: Call upon those whom you assert (as gods) besides Allah; they do not control the weight of an atom in the heavens or in the earth, nor have they any partnership in either, nor has He a helper among them.[d] **23**And intercession does not avail with Him, except of one whom He permits. Until when fear is removed from their hearts, they say: What is it that your Lord said? They say: The Truth. And He is the Most High, the Great. **24**Say: Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth? Say: Allah. And surely

a **(16)** The bursting of the dyke of this city and its destruction by a flood are historically known facts, and took place in about the first or second century C.E.

b **(18)** The cities were so close to each other that one could be seen from the other, or they were conspicuous from the road. It is an indication of the great prosperity of the country. The blessed towns are the towns of Syria, with which they carried on trade.

c **(19)** It is not necessary that they should have thus prayed in words. It is a description of their actual condition, i.e., they were not grateful for the blessings and fell into evil ways, which resulted in punishment overtaking them.

d **(22)** It refers to the helplessness of the supposed gods to assist their votaries when distress overtakes them.

we or you are on a right way or in manifest error.[a] **25**Say: You will not be asked of what we are guilty, nor shall we be asked of what you do. **26**Say: Our Lord will gather us together, then He will judge between us with truth. And He is the Best Judge, the Knower.[b] **27**Say: Show me those whom you join with Him as partners. By no means (can you)! Indeed, He is Allah, the Mighty, the Wise.

28 And We have not sent *y*ou but as a bearer of good news and as a warner to all mankind, but most people do not know.[c] **29**And they say: When will this promise be (fulfilled), if you are truthful? **30**Say: You have the appointment of a day which you cannot postpone by an hour, nor bring it forward.[d]

Section 4: **The leaders of evil**

31 And those who disbelieve say: We do not believe in this Quran, nor in what is before it. And if *y*ou could see when the wrongdoers are made to stand before their Lord, throwing back the blame to one another! Those who were considered weak say to those who were proud: If it were not for you, we would have been believers. **32**Those who were proud say to those who were considered weak: Did we turn you away from the guidance after it had come to you? But you (yourselves) were guilty. **33**And those who were considered weak say to those who were proud: But (it was your) planning by night and day when you told us to disbelieve in Allah and to set up likes with Him. And they will manifest regret when they see the punishment. And We put chains on the necks of

***a* (24)** The meaning is that as surely as you are in manifest error, so surely are we on a right way.

***b* (26)** This is a prophecy which was fulfilled in the first decisive battle which clearly decided the issue between the Muslims and their opponents. The question in v. 29 — when will this promise be fulfilled? — makes it quite clear.

***c* (28)** The Prophet is repeatedly spoken of as having been sent as a messenger to all people, in the earliest as well as the later revelations. He is called "A warner to the nations" (25:1), "A mercy to the nations" (21:107), and so on. In one place, his being sent to people is qualified by the word *jamī'-an* (7:158), which means *all*. Here it is qualified by the word *kāffah*, which means *all without an exception*.

***d* (30)** The first encounter between the Muslims and their enemies took place in the Battle of Badr, after the first year of the Flight had passed away. Elsewhere the same question is answered by the words: "Maybe something of what you seek to hasten has drawn near to you" (27:72).

those who disbelieve. They will not be recompensed but for what they did.

34 And We never sent a warner to a town but those who led easy lives in it said: We are disbelievers in that with which you are sent. **35**And they say: We have more wealth and children, and we cannot be punished. **36**Say: Surely my Lord amplifies provision for whom He pleases, and restricts (it also), but most people do not know.[a]

Section 5: **Wealth does not stand for greatness**

37 And it is not your wealth, nor your children, that bring you near to Us in rank; but whoever believes and does good, for such is a double reward for what they do, and they are secure in the highest places.[b] **38**And those who strive in opposing Our messages, they will be brought to the punishment. **39**Say: Surely my Lord amplifies provision for whom He pleases of His servants, and restricts (it) for him (also). And whatsoever you spend, He increases it in reward,[c] and He is the Best of providers.

40 And on the day when He will gather them all together, then will He say to the angels: Did these worship you? **41**They will say: Glory be to You! You are our Protecting Friend, not they; rather, they worshipped the jinn; most of them were believers in them.[d] **42**So on that day you will not control benefit nor harm for one another. And We will say to those who were wrongdoers: Taste the punishment of the Fire, which you called a lie.

43 And when Our clear messages are recited to them, they say: This is only a man who desires to turn you away from what your fathers worshipped. And they say: This is nothing but a forged lie! And those who disbelieve say of the Truth when it comes to them:

***a* (36)** This expression is always used to signify that Allah will give ample means of subsistence to the weaker party and strengthen them against the wealthy transgressors.

***b* (37)** Not only in the highest places in paradise, but also in the highest places in this life — a truth which finds abundant illustration in the lives of the early Muslims.

***c* (39)** The words "increases it" (*yukhlifu-hu*) signify that Allah gives him such a great reward as to leave behind what he had spent in His way.

***d* (41)** Compare this with the last section, and it will be clear that the very persons mentioned there as the proud ones are spoken of here as the jinn.

This is only clear enchantment! **44**And We have not given them any Books which they read, nor did We send to them before *y*ou a warner.[a] **45**And those before them rejected (the truth), and these have not yet attained a tenth of what We gave them,[b] but they rejected My messengers. How (terrible) was then My disapproval!

Section 6: **Truth will prosper**

46 Say: I exhort you only to one thing: that you rise up for Allah's sake by twos and singly; then ponder! There is no madness in your companion. He is only a warner to you before a severe punishment. **47**Say: Whatever reward I ask of you, that is only for yourselves. My reward is only with Allah, and He is a Witness over all things. **48**Say: Surely my Lord casts the Truth, the great Knower of the unseen. **49**Say: The Truth has come, and falsehood neither originates, nor reproduces.[c] **50**Say: If I go astray, only to my own loss do I go astray; and if I go aright, it is because of what my Lord reveals to me. Surely He is Hearing, Near.

51 And if only *y*ou could see when they become terrified, but (then) there will be no escape and they will be seized from a near place;[d] **52**and they will say: We believe in it. And how can they attain (to faith) from a distant place?[e] **53**And they indeed disbelieved in it before, and they utter conjectures with regard to the unseen from a distant place.[f] **54**And a barrier is placed between them and what they desire,[g] as was done with their partisans before. Surely they are in a disquieting doubt.

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a **(44)** That is, no Book was ever given nor any warner ever raised that taught the worship of others besides the One God; or the meaning may be that, whereas warners appeared all about Arabia, Makkah had not yet seen one.

b **(45)** That is, in power or in material prosperity the Quraish could not stand comparison with many of the early nations.

c **(49)** The Truth may stand for Unity and falsehood for polytheism, the significance being that idol-worship will never again find access to Makkah. Compare 17:81: "Say: The Truth has come and falsehood vanished. Surely falsehood is ever bound to vanish."

d **(51)** In this world, they were seized upon at Badr and again at Makkah.

e **(52)** For death shall then have removed them into the other world.

f **(53)** Their conjectures that the Prophet will not be successful have no value, as they have no access to the unseen.

g **(54)** Indeed, no punishment is greater than failure to attain what a person desires most eagerly. This is the hell of this life.

Chapter 35

Al-Fāṭir The Originator

The title of this chapter is taken from the Divine attribute *the Originator* mentioned in the first verse. God, as Originator of the heavens and the earth, sweeps away the old order and generates a new one. The chapter begins by referring to Divine favours upon mankind and asserts the promise that truth will prevail. It then prophesies the rising of a new generation to promote the cause of truth and justice in the world. After this, it promises success to the believers, and at the end it reiterates the law that punishment is due to evil deeds. Chapters 34 to 39 form one group, belonging most probably to the middle period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Divine favours**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Praise be to Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth,[a] the Maker of the angels, messengers flying on wings, two, and three, and four.[b] He increases in creation what He pleases. Surely Allah is Powerful over all things.[c] **2**Whatever Allah grants

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a **(1-1)** God is here mentioned by his name *Fāṭir,* which means one who *splits*, and also who *originates* or brings a thing into existence for the first time. There may be reference to the creation of primeval matter in the original significance of *cleaving* or *splitting*. From the same root is the word *fiṭrah*, which means *nature* or *original quality* in which all human beings are said to have been made — "the nature made by Allah in which He has created mankind" (30:30). So there may be reference to this *fiṭrah* in the use of the word *Fāṭir,* as the *fiṭrah* or *nature of man* has a close relation with the *Fāṭir* or the Maker of that *fiṭrah*.

b **(1-2)** The *janāḥ* or *wing* of an angel by no means indicates the fore-limbs of a bird, which fit it for flight. It is a symbol of power enabling these immaterial beings to execute their functions, and in Arabic the word *janāḥ* stands for *power*. Angels are here spoken of as having two, three or four wings. There may be a reference here to the *rak'ahs* of prayer which are two, three or four in number in various prayers. In prayer man holds communion with God and is raised to spiritual eminence; he, as it were, flies to God, is on his wings, and the angels are the agents which make him fly to God, their wings thus standing for the *rak'ahs* of prayer.

c **(1-3)** The increase in creation may refer in a general sense to the new creation which is going on momentarily in this universe, or there may be a

to people of (His) mercy, there is none to withhold it, and what He withholds, none can grant thereafter. And He is the Mighty, the Wise. **3**O people, call to mind the favour of Allah to you. Is there any Creator besides Allah who provides for you from the heaven and the earth? There is no God but He. How are you then turned away (from truth)! **4**And if they reject *y*ou — truly messengers before *y*ou were rejected. And to Allah are all affairs returned.

5 O people, surely the promise of Allah is true, so do not let the life of this world deceive you. And do not let the arch-deceiver deceive you about Allah. **6**Surely the devil is your enemy, so take him for an enemy. He only invites his followers to be companions of the burning Fire. **7**Those who disbelieve, for them is a severe punishment. And those who believe and do good, for them is forgiveness and a great reward.

Section 2: **Truth will prevail**

8 What of him whose evil deed is made attractive to him so that he considers it good? Now surely Allah leaves in error whom He pleases and guides aright whom He pleases, so do not let *y*our soul waste in grief for them. Surely Allah is Knower of what they do. **9**And Allah is He Who sends the winds, so they raise a cloud, then We drive it on to a dead land, and with it We give life to the earth after its death. Even so is the rising.[a] **10**Whoever desires might, then to Allah belongs the might wholly. To Him do ascend the goodly words, and the goodly deed — He exalts it. And those who plan evil — for them is a severe punishment. And their plan will perish.[b]

11 And Allah created you from dust, then from the life-germ, then He made you pairs. And no female bears, nor gives birth, except with His knowledge. And no one living long is granted long life, nor is his life shortened at all, but it is in a book. Surely this is

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reference here to the increase in the number of the elect which was to be brought about through the Prophet. Or still again, the meaning may be that the power of angels is not limited to two, three or four wings, for there are angels of mighty power like Gabriel, who is spoken of as having six hundred wings.

a **(9)** This is clearly the rising to spiritual life.

b **(10)** Good words ascend to God, i.e., prosper and bear fruit, and good deeds are exalted, while the evil plans to destroy Truth perish.

easy to Allah.[a] **12**And the two seas are not alike: the one sweet, very sweet, pleasant to drink; and the other saltish, bitter. Yet from both you eat fresh flesh and bring forth ornaments which you wear. And *y*ou see the ships cleave through it, that you may seek of His bounty and that you may give thanks. **13**He makes the night to pass into the day, and makes the day to pass into the night, and He has made subservient the sun and the moon, each one moves to an appointed time. This is Allah, your Lord; His is the kingdom. And those whom you call upon besides Him own not a straw. **14**If you call on them, they do not hear your call; and if they heard, they could not answer you. And on the day of Resurrection they will deny your making them partners (of Allah). And none can inform *y*ou like the All-Aware One.

Section 3: **A new generation will be raised**

15 O people, it is you that have need of Allah, and Allah is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised. **16**If He please, He will remove you and bring a new creation. **17**And this is not hard to Allah. **18**And no bearer of a burden can bear another's burden. And if one weighed down by a burden calls another to carry his load, nothing of it will be carried, even though he be near of kin. *Y*ou can only warn those who fear their Lord in secret and keep up prayer. And whoever purifies himself, purifies himself only for his own good. And to Allah is the eventual coming.

19 And the blind and the seeing are not alike, **20**nor the darkness and the light, **21**nor the shade and the heat. **22**Neither are the living and the dead alike. Surely Allah makes whom He pleases hear, and *y*ou cannot make those hear who are in the graves.[b] **23***Y*ou are only a warner. **24**Surely We have sent *y*ou with the Truth as a bearer of good news and a warner. And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them.[c]

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a **(11)** There is a hint that the seed of truth is sown and generates in a similar manner.

b **(22)** Note how spiritual truths are conveyed in words relating to physical life. *Those in the graves* are the very people who were actively engaged in opposition to the Prophet. The seeing are those who have their eyes opened spiritually, the light is the spiritual light, the living are those alive in spirit, and so on.

c **(24)** This broad doctrine that a prophet was raised among every nation is taught repeatedly in the Quran and it is met with in the earlier revelation at

25 And if they reject *y*ou, those before them also rejected — their messengers came to them with clear arguments, and with scriptures, and with the illuminating Book.[a] **26**Then I seized those who disbelieved, so how (terrible) was My disapproval!

Section 4: **The elect**

27 Do *y*ou not see that Allah sends down water from the clouds, then We bring forth with it fruits of various colours? And in the mountains are streaks, white and red, of various colours and (others) intensely black. **28**And of mankind and beasts and cattle there are various colours likewise. Those of His servants only who are possessed of knowledge fear Allah. Surely Allah is Mighty, Forgiving.

29 Surely those who recite the Book of Allah and keep up prayer and spend (on good works) out of what We have given them, secretly and openly, hope for a gain which does not perish — **30**that He may pay them back fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace. Surely He is Forgiving, Multiplier of reward. **31**And what We have revealed to *y*ou of the Book, that is the truth, verifying what is (already) before it.[b] Surely Allah is Aware, Seer of His servants. **32**Then We have given the Book as inheritance to those whom We have chosen from among Our servants: so some of them do wrong to themselves, and some of them take a middle course, and some of them are foremost in deeds of goodness by Allah's permission.[c] That is the great grace, **33**Gardens of perpetuity,

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Makkah as well as the later revelation at Madinah. This great truth, which had remained hidden for thousands of years from the wisest men of the world, had shone upon the mind of an Arabian who could neither read nor write, who did not even know what nations then existed and what scriptures they possessed. This broad doctrine alone could form the basis of the universality of a Divine message to the whole of mankind. Only he who had the breadth of mind to recognize truth in all could unite all mankind.

a **(25)** See 3:184.

b **(31)** Note that as the Quran recognizes that prophets were raised in every nation, so it claims that previous revelation contains prophecies which have been fulfilled in the advent of the Holy Prophet. This is an early Makkan revelation.

c **(32)** After speaking of the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet, we are told that the Holy Book was now being given as an inheritance to a *chosen* people, i.e., the Muslim community, who are chosen to carry this great message to the whole world. But the chosen people are not all alike. Among them are some who

which they enter — they are made to wear therein bracelets of gold and pearls, and their dress therein is silk.[a] **34**And they say: Praise be to Allah, Who has removed grief from us![b] Surely our Lord is Forgiving, Multiplier of reward, **35**Who out of His grace has settled us in a house abiding forever; therein toil does not touch us nor does fatigue afflict us therein.[c]

36 And those who disbelieve, for them is the Fire of hell; it is not finished with them so that they should die, nor is its punishment lightened to them. Thus do We recompense every ungrateful one. **37**And in it they cry for help: Our Lord, take us out! We will do good deeds, not those which we used to do! Did We not give you a life long enough, for him to be mindful who would mind? And the warner came to you. So taste; because for the wrongdoers there is no helper.

Section 5: **Punishment due to evil deeds**

38 Surely Allah is the Knower of the unseen in the heavens and the earth. Surely He is Knower of what is in the hearts. **39**He it is Who made you successors in the earth. So whoever disbelieves, his disbelief is against himself. And their disbelief increases the disbelievers with their Lord only in hatred; and their disbelief increases the disbelievers in nothing but loss.

40 Say: Have you seen your associate-gods which you call upon besides Allah? Show me what they have created of the earth! Or have they any share in the heavens? Or, have We given them a

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wrong themselves — they do not fulfil Divine commandments. There are others among them who follow a middle course; they are not wrongdoers but they are not very active in the doing of good. There are others still, who are foremost in the doing of good, those who have attained to nearness to God. It is thus made clear that when a community is spoken of as being *a chosen community*, all members of it are not alike. It is chosen because of those who are foremost in the doing of good, whose example the others should try to follow.

a **(33)** The promise refers to this life as well as to the next. See 22:23 footnote.

b **(34)** Here is drawn a true picture of paradise: *Who has removed grief from us*. This shows that freedom from grief and anxiety is the real bliss of paradise. The repeated promise to the righteous, that they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve, expresses the same truth, and shows that paradise begins in this life.

c **(35)** Note this further description of a spiritual paradise: *where toil and fatigue no more afflict a man*. It is all peace and satisfaction and the highest bliss.

Book so that they follow a clear argument from it? No, the wrongdoers hold out promises to one another only to deceive. **41**Surely Allah upholds the heavens and the earth or they would come to naught. And if they come to naught, none can uphold them after Him. Surely He is ever Forbearing, Forgiving.

42 And they swore by Allah, their strongest oaths, that, if a warner came to them, they would be better guided than any of the nations. But when a warner came to them, it increased them only in aversion,[a] **43**behaving proudly in the land and planning evil. And the evil plan engulfs none but the authors of it. So they wait only for the way of the ancients. But *y*ou will find no alteration in the course of Allah; and *y*ou will find no change in the course of Allah. **44**Have they not travelled in the land and seen what was the end of those before them — and they were stronger than those in power? And Allah is not such that anything in the heavens or the earth can escape Him. Surely He is ever Knowing, Powerful. **45**And if Allah were to punish people for what they earn, He would not leave on the back of it any creature,[b] but He gives them respite till an appointed term; so when their doom comes, then surely Allah is ever Seer of His servants.

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a **(42)** There were Jews and Christians in Arabia who were as corrupt as the idolaters of Arabia. The Arabs, therefore, said that, if a prophet came to them as prophets came to other people, they would follow him, and set an example of goodness.

b **(45)** Similar words occur in 16:61: "And if Allah were to destroy people for their wrongdoing, He would not leave on it a single creature". Evidently by *creature* here are meant people bent low on earth, people ignorant of the higher or spiritual values of life, or the wrongdoers; see 27:82 and 34:14.

Chapter 36

Yā Sīn

The title of this chapter is taken from the initial letters *Yā Sīn* which form the first verse, meaning *O man* or *O Perfect man,* addressing the Holy Prophet. The chapter declares the truth of the Quran and begins by saying that its revelation will, after initial opposition, give life to a dead humanity. This is illustrated by a parable. Signs in nature are pointed to, indicating that the same law is working in the spiritual world. It goes on to show that acceptors and rejectors of truth will be dealt with distinctly. In the end it draws attention to the Resurrection and life after death, an awareness of which makes a person feel responsible for his actions. Chapters 34 to 39 form one group, belonging most probably to the middle period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Truth of the Quran**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O man![a] **2**By the Quran, full of wisdom! **3**Surely *y*ou are one of the messengers, **4**on a right way. **5**A revelation of the Mighty, the Merciful, **6**that *y*ou may warn a people whose fathers were not warned,[b] so they are heedless. **7**The word has indeed proved true of most of them, so they do not believe.[c] **8**Surely We have placed on their necks chains reaching up to the chins, so they have their heads raised aloft.[d] **9**And We have set a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, thus We have covered them, so that they do not see.[e]

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a **(1)** According to the companion Ibn Abbas, *Yā Sīn* means *yā insān:* "O man!" There is almost a consensus of opinion that the reference in this abbreviation is to the Holy Prophet himself.

b **(6)** The first warning of the Prophet was for the Makkans, but he was a warner for all nations as well; see 25:1.

c **(7)** The *word which proved true* is that Truth is always opposed first but it wins in the end.

d **(8)** This is a description of the proud attitude of the disbelievers towards the Prophet's preaching. The chains of pride and stubbornness are really the things which prevent them from listening to and accepting the message of the Prophet.

e **(9)** These were the barriers of their own stubbornness. The barriers before them prevented them from looking forward to the eminence to which they could

10And it is the same to them whether *y*ou warn them or do not warn them — they do not believe. **11***Y*ou can warn only him who follows the Reminder and fears the Beneficent in secret; so give him good news of forgiveness and a generous reward. **12**Surely We give life to the dead, and We write down what they send on ahead and their footprints,[a] and We record everything in a clear writing.

Section 2: **Confirmation of the Truth**

13 And set out to them a parable of the people of the town, when messengers came to it. **14**When We sent to them two, they rejected them both; then We strengthened (them) with a third, so they said: Surely we are sent to you.[b] **15**They said: You are only mortals like ourselves, nor has the Beneficent revealed anything — you only lie.[c] **16**They said: Our Lord knows that we are surely sent to you. **17**And our duty is only to deliver the message clearly. **18**They said: Surely we consider you an evil omen.[d] If you do not stop, we will surely stone you, and a painful punishment from us will certainly afflict you. **19**They said: Your evil fortune is with you. What! If you are reminded! Indeed, you are an extravagant people.[e]

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rise by following the Truth, and those behind them prevented them from looking back to the history of nations destroyed on account of their rejection of the Truth.

a **(12)** *What they send on ahead* are their deeds, and *their footprints* are the marks they leave behind for others to follow.

b **(14)** This is called a parable in the previous verse; therefore it is an error to name a particular town and three messengers who went together to it. The parable is set forth only to point out the truth of the Holy Prophet. The two messengers sent before are Moses and Jesus, both of whom clearly prophesied the advent of the Holy Prophet, and the third, with whom they are strengthened, is no other than the Holy Prophet himself, the fulfilment of prophecy in whose person without doubt strengthened the truth of previous revelation. The conversion of Arabia and its reclamation from idolatry had been tried both by the followers of Moses and Jesus, and both had failed, and a third messenger was now sent.

c **(15)** Note that the people here deny all revelation. The Arabs rejected previous revelation as well as the revelation of the Holy Prophet.

d **(18)** Distress in one form or other always overtakes a people when a prophet appears among them. See 6:42. It is to this distress that the rejectors of messengers refer.

e **(19)** They are told that distress is not due to the Prophet's advent, but is the result of their own evil deeds, and the Prophet does no more than remind them and warn them of the consequences of their evil deeds.

*Part 23

20 And from the remote part of the city a man came running.[a]
He said: My people, follow the messengers. **21**Follow him who asks
of you no reward, and they are on the right course. ***22**And what
reason have I that I should not serve Him Who created me and to
Whom you will be brought back. **23**Shall I take besides Him gods
whose intercession, if the Beneficent should desire to afflict me
with harm, will not avail me in the least, nor can they deliver me?
24Then I shall surely be in clear error. **25**Surely I believe in your
Lord, so hear me.

26 It was said: Enter the Garden.[b] He said: If only my people
knew **27**how my Lord has forgiven me and made me from among
the honoured ones! **28**And We did not send down upon his people
after him any army from heaven, nor do We ever send.[c] **29**It was but
a single cry,[d] and — lo! — they were still. **30**Alas for the servants!
Never does a messenger come to them but they mock him. **31**Do they
not see how many generations We destroyed before them, that they
do not return to them? [e] **32**And all — surely all — will be brought
before Us.

Section 3: **Signs of the Truth**

33 And a sign to them is the dead earth: We give life to it and
bring forth from it grain so they eat of it.[f] **34**And We make in it
gardens of date-palms and grapes and We make springs to flow
forth in it, **35**that they may eat of the fruit thereof, and their hands
did not make it. Will they not then give thanks? **36**Glory be to Him

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***a* (20)** This man represents the believer in the Truth. Every prophet has testimony borne to his truth by one from among the people themselves. Thus the Quran speaks of a believer from among the people of Pharaoh (40:28), and Joseph of Arimathaea believed in and helped Jesus. The Prophet Muhammad had such a follower in Abu Bakr, who was the first man to believe, while the others rejected.

***b* (26)** It is a promise to the believer that he will be successful.

***c* (28)** Armies are not sent down from above to chastise the wicked, but causes are brought into existence on this very earth.

***d* (29)** The *single cry* signifies only a sudden punishment.

***e* (31)** The words may also mean that many generations were destroyed before them because they did not turn to the messengers.

***f* (33)** How dead the earth, and particularly Arabia, was at the advent of the Holy Prophet, it is impossible to describe within a footnote. As the physical world shows the working of the Divine law that life is restored to the earth after its death, the same law would work in the spiritual world.

Who created pairs of all things, of what the earth grows, and of their own kind and of what they do not know![a]

37 And a sign to them is the night: We draw forth from it the (light of) day, then — lo! — they are in darkness;[b] **38**and the sun moves on to its destination. That is the ordinance of the Mighty, the Knower. **39**And the moon, We have ordained for it stages till it becomes again as an old dry palm-branch.[c] **40**Neither is it for the sun to overtake the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day. And all float on in an orbit.[d] **41**And a sign to them is that We carry their offspring in the laden ship, **42**and We have created for them (other things) the like of it, on which they ride.[e] **43**And if We please, We may drown them, then there is no help for them, nor can they be rescued[f] — **44**but by mercy from Us and for enjoyment till a time.

45 And when it is said to them: Guard against what is before you and what is behind you, that mercy may be shown to you.[g]

***a* (36)** This verse establishes a great scientific truth, that pairs exist in all creation, even in the vegetable kingdom and in things which had not yet come to the knowledge of man. The Arabs certainly did not know this, but modern research corroborates this truth.

***b* (37)** The night of ignorance must now pass away; for as in the physical world night follows day and day follows night, so in the spiritual world light is followed by the darkness of ignorance and the latter again gives place to light.

***c* (39)** Even such is the case of truth, which seems at first to be insignificant, but soon shines forth like a full moon.

***d* (40)** Even truth and falsehood have their courses. As night must disappear with the rise of the day, so falsehood must vanish before the light of Truth. The flotation of the heavenly bodies in their orbits is a statement beyond the ken of an Arabian of the 7th century C.E. The Quran is a book for the spiritual guidance of man, but it discloses a large number of scientific truths which were not known to man at the time of the revelation of the Book.

***e* (42)** The ships that bear man on the seas are spoken of in v. 41. These were known to man at the time of the revelation of the Quran. But this verse speaks of other ships, *like them*. These are the aeroplanes of today. They are spoken of as being created by God, because it is through the knowledge and means that God has given man that he is able to acquire mastery of the air and make these ships.

***f* (43)** This is a warning of the impending punishment. Drowning in the sea signifies their destruction, wherever it may take place. The word chosen to describe the punishment is one which shows the utter helplessness of the sufferers.

***g* (45)** *What is before you* signifies the punishment which must overtake them in this life, and *what is behind you* means the consequences of evil which they would witness in the Hereafter.

46And no message comes to them of the messages of their Lord but they turn away from it. **47**And when it is said to them: Spend (on good works) out of what Allah has given you, those who disbelieve say to those who believe: Shall we feed him whom, if Allah please, He could feed? You are in nothing but clear error.[a] **48**And they say: When will this promise come to pass, if you are truthful? **49**They await but a single cry, which will overtake them while they argue. **50**So they will not be able to make a bequest, nor will they return to their families.[b]

Section 4: **Reward and punishment**

51 And the trumpet is blown, when — lo! — from their graves they will hasten on to their Lord. **52**They will say: O woe to us! Who has raised us up from our sleeping-place?[c] This is what the Beneficent promised and the messengers told the truth. **53**It is but a single cry, when — lo! — they are all brought before Us. **54**So this day no soul is wronged in the least and you are only rewarded for what you did.

55 Surely the owners of the Garden are on that day in a happy occupation. **56**They and their wives are in shades, reclining on raised couches. **57**In it they have fruits and they have whatever they desire. **58**Peace! A word from a Merciful Lord.[d]

59 And withdraw today, O guilty ones! **60**Did I not charge you, O children of Adam, not to serve the devil? Surely he is your open enemy. **61**And that you serve Me. This is the right way. **62**And certainly he led astray numerous people from among you. Could you not then understand? **63**This is the hell which you were promised. **64**Enter it this day because you disbelieved. **65**That day We shall

***a* (47)** So they turned neither to submission to Allah, nor to sympathy for their fellow-beings.

***b* (50)** This is a prophetical description of the Battle of Badr. The Quraish attacked Madinah to annihilate Islam but the leaders of evil were themselves finished there, and could neither make a bequest, nor did they return to their families.

***c* (52)** The grave is called a sleeping-place even for the disbelievers, because, as compared with the severer punishment of hell, the grave would be to them a sleeping-place. It should be noted that *the grave* signifies the *condition after life is ended in this world*.

***d* (58)** Here we have another picture of the Muslim paradise. After describing the various blessings, it sums them up in a single word, *peace*.

seal their mouths, and their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will bear witness as to what they earned. **66**And if We pleased, We would put out their eyes, then they would struggle to get ahead to (find) the way, but how should they see?[a] **67**And if We pleased, We would transform them in their place so they would be unable to go on or turn back.[b]

Section 5: **The Resurrection**

68 And whomever We grant long life, We cause him to deteriorate in creation.[c] Do they not understand? **69**And We have not taught him poetry,[d] nor is it befitting for him. This is nothing but a Reminder and a plain Quran, **70**to warn him who would have life, and (that) the word may prove true against the disbelievers.

71 Do they not see that We have created cattle for them, out of what Our hands have made, so they are their masters? **72**And We have subjected them to them, so some of them they ride, and some they eat. **73**And in them they have (other) advantages and drinks. Will they not then give thanks? **74**And they take gods besides Allah that they may be helped. **75**They are not able to help them, and they will be a group brought up (for judgment) before them.[e] **76**So do not let their speech grieve *y*ou. Surely We know what they do in secret and what they do openly.

77 Does not man see that We have created him from the small life-germ? Then — lo! — he is an open contender. **78**And he strikes

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a **(66)** These are the reprobate. They shut their eyes to the truth with such persistence that their eyes become blind; they no longer see, even if they would.

b **(67)** The meaning of *transforming them in their place* is taking away their power and rendering them weak and turning them into an evil plight.

c **(68)** It is a general law of nature that every living thing must deteriorate; the application here is to individuals as well as nations.

d **(69)** Its negation as poetry is meant to convey the seriousness of the subjects that the Quran deals with.

e **(75)** The guilty leaders will be brought up for punishment before their followers and they will not be able to help them. Or, the worshippers of false deities will be brought up for punishment in the presence of those deities and they will not be able to help them.

out a likeness for Us and forgets his own creation.[a] Says he: Who will give life to the bones, when they are rotten? **79**Say: He will give life to them, Who brought them into existence at first, and He is Knower of all creation, **80**Who produced fire for you out of the green tree, so that with it you kindle.[b] **81**Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth Able to create the like of them?[c] Yes! And He is the Creator (of all), the Knower.

82 His command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it, Be, and it is. **83**So glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things, and to Him you will be returned.

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a **(78)** Striking out of a likeness signifies the setting up of gods with Allah.

b **(80)** *Editor's Note:* This may refer to the process of photosynthesis. The *green* substance in tree leaves, chlorophyll, absorbs *sunlight* to produce carbohydrates and oxygen from water and carbon dioxide. This process is the basis of supporting physical life on earth. Similarly, light from the sun of Truth, the Holy Prophet (called *Yā Sīn*), produces a higher life in those who follow him.

c **(81)** The personal pronoun *them* refers to people, not to heaven and earth. In the Resurrection, people will be the like of what they are here, not the same earthly bodies. The body may become dust; but what a person does of good or evil is preserved, and it is according to this good or evil that he receives a new body. The idea of Resurrection is carried to perfection in Islam, and the Resurrection is meant to give a new life to all. Ultimately the spirit of man is returned to the Spirit Divine, and that is again and again called the meeting with God.

Chapter 37

Al-Ṣāffāt Those Ranging in Ranks

The title of this chapter is taken from its opening words which give a description of the faithful. It begins by announcing a clear prophecy of the ultimate victory of the doctrine of Oneness of God and then establishes the truth of the judgment. After this, the preachings of a number of prophets are mentioned, the last of these being Jonah. The chapter concludes with a prediction of the triumph of the Holy Prophet. Chapters 34 to 39 form one group, belonging most probably to the middle period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Unity will prevail**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By those ranging in ranks,[a] **2**and those who restrain holding in restraint, **3**and those who recite the Reminder, **4**surely your God is One. **5**The Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is

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a **(1)** The *wāw*, which means *and*, is in such places rendered as *by*, and signifies *an oath*. In such cases the oath simply draws attention to a certain testimony. The real object in taking an oath is to make an assertion more convincing, but in the Quran, when such a form is adopted, the conviction is produced not by mere allegation, but by some clear argument. Sometimes attention is called in these oaths to obvious laws of nature to infer spiritual laws from them, and on other occasions the oath reveals a kind of prophecy, whose fulfilment makes the truth of the preaching of the Prophet to be obvious. The latter is the case here.

The description given in verses 1–3 applies to the believers. Verse 1 shows them as *ranging themselves in ranks*, or praying to God standing in ranks, which Muslims do five times daily in their prayers in congregation, and may prophetically refer to their subsequent ranging themselves in ranks in the field of battle against their enemies. Verse 2 describes them as *holding in restraint* their passions, so that a people who were ruled by their passions or their sensual desires were so entirely changed that they became complete masters of their passions. The words may also contain a prophecy to their holding in restraint a powerful enemy bent upon their extirpation. Verse 3 makes it clear that only Muslims are described here: *those who recite the Reminder*. It is a special characteristic of the Muslims that they recite the Quran in their prayers, so much so that even their armies in the field of battle are regular in their prayers, in which they recite the Quran. And the great Truth that is thus established is Divine Unity — *surely your God is One*.

between them, and the Lord of the eastern lands.[a] 6Surely We have adorned the lower heaven with an adornment, the stars, 7and (there is) a safeguard against every rebellious devil.[b] 8They cannot listen to the exalted assembly and they are reproached from every side,[c] 9driven off;[d] and for them is a perpetual punishment, 10except him who snatches away but once, then there follows him a brightly shining flame.[e] 11So ask them whether they are stronger in creation or those (others) whom We have created. Surely We created them of firm clay.[f]

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a **(5)** The reference to the eastern lands is a prophecy of the early spread of Islam in the East, while Islam's conquests in the West seem to have been reserved for a later age.

b **(7)** The Prophet's preaching was confronted by a twofold opposition among the Arabs — the secular classes and the priestly class, i.e., the diviners and the soothsayers, the class known as *Kāhin*. It is these soothsayers who are called the rebellious devils, because they thought that they could invoke spirits and answer questions put to them relating to the future. This phase of opposition was equally swept away by the forceful tide of Islamic truth, and the profession of the *Kāhin* disappeared from Arabia as Islam advanced. The mention of heaven and stars in the previous verse refers to the popular superstition that the diviners and soothsayers obtained their knowledge of the future from the stars. The *safeguard against every rebellious devil* indicates that they have no access to Divine secrets; see further 52:38 and 72:8.

c **(8)** The reference here is to the conjectures of the soothsayers regarding the future, by which they maintained their ascendancy over the masses. It is pointed out that they have no access whatever to the source of prophecy. The "exalted" assembly signifies those angels to whom Divine revelation is first made known. Or, the reference may be to the secular opponents of the Prophet, who, it is here foretold, would be thrown at from every side, so that success could not attend any of their efforts.

d **(9)** This verse and those preceding it describe the state of the soothsayers at the advent of the Prophet. Before the advent of the Holy Prophet, the soothsayers may have been able to mislead the people to a certain extent by their guesses regarding future events, but after his advent they were reproached on every side, and ultimately the profession of the *kahin* disappeared from Arabia, as shown in the footnote to v. 7. Or, the reference may be to the overthrow of ordinary opposition.

e **(10)** The meaning is that, if a soothsayer gets but one opportunity, there soon follows a flame that pierces through the darkness; in other words, dispels the darkness to which the soothsayer leads people.

f **(11)** Those created of firm clay are the spiritually perfect men, i.e., the Prophet and his followers. The verse points to the opposition of the soothsayers to the Prophet, and warns the former that the Prophet will be triumphant, because he is made perfect by Allah's hand.

12 But *y*ou wonder, while they mock, **13**and when they are reminded, they are not mindful, **14**and when they see a sign, they seek to scoff, **15**and say: This is nothing but clear enchantment. **16**When we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we then be raised, **17**or our forefathers? **18**Say: Yes indeed, and you will be humiliated.[a] **19**So it will be but one cry, when — lo! — they will see. **20**And they will say: O woe to us! This is the day of Recompense. **21**This is the day of Judgment, which you called a lie.

Section 2: **The Judgment**

22 Gather together those who did wrong and their associates, and what they worshipped [b] **23**besides Allah, then lead them to the way to hell. **24**And stop them, for they shall be questioned: **25**What is the matter with you that you do not help one another? **26**But on that day they will be submissive. **27**And they will turn to one another, mutually questioning — **28**saying: Surely you used to come to us from the right side. **29**They will say: No, you (yourselves) were not believers. **30**And we had no authority over you, but you were an inordinate people. **31**So the word of our Lord has proved true against us: we shall surely taste. **32**We led you astray, for we ourselves were in error. **33**So, that day they will be sharers in the punishment. **34**Thus do We deal with the guilty.

35 They indeed were arrogant, when it was said to them: There is no god but Allah; **36**and said: Shall we give up our gods for a mad poet? **37**No, he has brought the Truth and verifies the messengers. **38**Surely you will taste the painful punishment. **39**And you are recompensed only for what you did — **40**except the servants of Allah, the purified ones. **41**For them is a known sustenance:[c] **42**fruits.

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a **(18)** That is, you will not only be raised after death to taste of your evil deeds, but even here you will be brought low. This is again a prophecy of the defeat of the enemy in this very life.

b **(22)** Though the description of the helplessness of the wrongdoers given in this and the following verses applies to life after death, it equally describes their condition in this life.

c **(41)** The word *ma'lūm* ("known") shows that the sustenance mentioned in the verses that follow is one that is already *known* to those servants of Allah who are purified from every pollution. This description of the blessings of paradise shows that all those blessings were spiritually tasted by the righteous in this life. In fact, their brief but important description as *fruits* in the next verse clearly shows those blessings to be the fruits of their good deeds.

And they are honoured, [43]in Gardens of delight, [44]on thrones, facing each other. [45]Round about them is made to go a bowl of running water, [46]white, delicious to those who drink. [47]It does not deprive of reason, nor are they exhausted by it.[a] [48]And with them are those modest in gaze, having beautiful eyes, [49]as if they were eggs, carefully protected.[b]

50 Then they will turn to one another, mutually questioning. [51]A speaker from among them will say: Surely I had a comrade, [52]who said: Are *y*ou indeed one of those who accept? [53]When we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we then be brought to judgment? [54]He will say: Will you look? [55]Then he looked down and saw him in the midst of hell. [56]He will say: By Allah! *Y*ou had almost caused me to perish; [57]and if it were not for the favour of my Lord, I should have been among those brought up (for punishment). [58]Are we not to die, [59]except our previous death? And are we not to be punished? [60]Surely this is the mighty achievement. [61]For the like of this, then, let the workers work.

62 Is this the better entertainment or the tree of Zaqqūm?[c] [63]Surely We have made it a trial for the wrongdoers. [64]It is a tree that grows in the bottom of hell — [65]its produce is as it were the heads of serpents. [66]Then truly they will eat of it and fill (their)

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a **(47)** The drinks of this life, though a source of pleasure, bring evil in their train. The drinks of the next life cause neither loss of reason, nor exhaustion. The name is common, but the nature of the two is different.

b **(49)** The description of women given here calls attention to the prominent feature of the character of a good woman. Attention is first called to the fact that the most valuable virtue of woman is that rare chastity which is described here as *modest in gaze* or freedom of the eye from lust. Then the beauty of their eyes is praised, the suggestion clearly being that the real beauty of the eye consists in its purity. Secondly, they are described as being eggs carefully protected, which alludes to their pure and unsoiled character. It should, however, be noted that what is apparently a description of women is really a description of the fruits of deeds done in this life, the words adopted being applicable to both (see the word *ḥūr* in 52:20), and these are in fact spiritual blessings manifested physically. The blessings which it promises, whatever they may be, are as much meant for men as for women; the only thing certain about them is that their nature is different from the nature of the physical blessings of this life. See also 38:52.

c **(62)** *Zaqqūm* is "a dust-coloured tree, having small round leaves without thorns. It has a pungent odour and is bitter, and has knots in its stems ... the heads of its leaves are very foul" and it also means *any deadly food* (Lane's Lexicon). See also 17:60 and 44:43.

bellies with it. [67]Then surely they shall have after it a drink of boiling water. [68]Then their return is surely to the flaming Fire.[a] [69]They indeed found their fathers astray, [70]so in their footsteps they are hastening on. [71]And most of the ancients surely went astray before them, [72]and indeed We sent among them warners. [73]Then see what was the end of those warned — [74]except the servants of Allah, the purified ones.

Section 3: **Noah and Abraham**

75 And Noah certainly called upon Us, and excellent Answerer of prayers are We! [76]And We delivered him and his people from the great distress; [77]and made his offspring the survivors, [78]and granted him among the later generations (the salutation): [79]Peace be on Noah among the nations! [80]Thus do We reward the doers of good. [81]Surely he was one of Our believing servants. [82]Then We drowned the others.

83 And surely of his party was Abraham. [84]When he came to his Lord with a secure heart. [85]When he said to his sire and his people: What is it that you worship? [86]A lie — gods besides Allah do you desire? [87]What is then your idea about the Lord of the worlds? [88]Then he glanced a glance at the stars, [89]and said: Surely I am sick (of your deities).[b] [90]So they turned their backs on him, going away.

91 Then he turned to their gods and said: Do you not eat? [92]What is the matter with you that you do not speak? [93]So he turned upon them, striking with the right hand. [94]Then they came to him, hurrying. [95]He said: Do you worship that which you carve out? [96]And Allah has created you and what you make. [97]They said: Build for him a building, then cast him into the flaming fire. [98]And they designed a plan against him, but We brought them low.

***a* (68)** The words, *then their return is surely to the flaming Fire*, are very significant, as if the food and drink described above were to be given to them before they went to hell. This is the reason that it is called *an entertainment* (v. 62). It is in fact a description of their evil plight in this life as well as in the Hereafter.

***b* (89)** The people with whom Abraham contended were not only worshippers of idols, but also worshippers of stars. Hence Abraham cast a glance at the stars and declared that he could not bear their worshipping others than God. The words here may also be translated as *I bear spite to your false gods*.

99 And he said: Surely I flee to my Lord — He will guide me.
100 My Lord, grant me a doer of good deeds. **101**So We gave him the good news of a forbearing son. **102**But when he became of age to work with him, he said: My son, I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice *y*ou,[a] so consider what *y*ou think. He said: My father, do as *y*ou are commanded; if Allah please, *y*ou will find me patient. **103**So when they both submitted and he had thrown him down upon his forehead, **104**and We called out to him saying, O Abraham, **105***y*ou have indeed fulfilled the vision.[b] Thus do We reward the doers of good. **106**Surely this is a manifest trial. **107**And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.[c]

108 And We granted him among the later generations (the salutation): **109**Peace be on Abraham! **110**Thus do We reward the doers of good. **111**Surely he was one of Our believing servants. **112**And We gave him the good news of Isaac, a prophet, a righteous one.

***a* (102)** That the child spoken of here was Ishmael and not Isaac is made clear by v. 112, which states that it was after this incident that Abraham received the news of the birth of Isaac. This, no doubt, contradicts the Bible statement, but the fact that Ishmael's descendants kept a memorial of this sacrifice in the annual pilgrimage to Makkah shows clearly that Ishmael, and not Isaac, was the son whom Abraham was commanded to sacrifice. Moreover, the Bible contradicts itself when it speaks of Isaac as "your only son" (Genesis, 22:2). Only Ishmael could be spoken of as "only son" before the birth of Isaac.

***b* (105)** The words, *you have indeed fulfilled the vision*, show that the act of slaughtering was not needed for the fulfilment of the vision; the preparedness to do it amounted to its fulfilment. According to the Bible, Abraham cast out his son Ishmael and his mother Hagar in some wilderness when Ishmael was fourteen years of age (Genesis, 21:9–21). The Quran is silent on this point, but, according to Bukhari, the incident occurred when Ishmael was yet a suckling, and it was not in accordance with the wishes of Sarah but according to a Divine commandment that Abraham left Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness near the Sacred House, and it was here, when Ishmael was in distress, that the water at Zamzam was discovered (Bukhari, 60:9, hadith 3664). The reference in the words *you have indeed fulfilled the vision* may be to this incident, Abraham being told that the dream had already been fulfilled by casting out Ishmael and leaving him at Makkah.

***c* (107)** To commemorate Ishmael's sacrifice, a great sacrifice was ordered. This was not only the sacrifice of a ram on this particular occasion, but the great institution of sacrifice now connected with the pilgrimage to Makkah. Perhaps there is also a reference here to the abolition of human sacrifice, which was prevalent among most ancient nations, and the significance is that the place of human sacrifice was now forever being taken by the sacrifice of a ram.

[113]And We blessed him and Isaac.[a] And among their offspring some are doers of good, but some are clearly unjust to themselves.

Section 4: **Moses, Aaron, Elias and Lot**

114 And certainly We conferred a favour on Moses and Aaron. [115]And We delivered them and their people from the mighty distress. [116]And We helped them, so they were triumphant. [117]And We gave them both the clear Book. [118]And We guided them on the right way. [119]And We granted them among the later generations (the salutation): [120]Peace be on Moses and Aaron! [121]Thus do We reward the doers of good. [122]Surely they were both from among Our believing servants.

123 And Elias was surely one of the messengers. [124]When he said to his people: Will you not guard against evil? [125]Do you call upon Ba'l and forsake the Best of the creators,[b] [126]Allah, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers? [127]But they rejected him, so they shall be brought up (for punishment), [128]but not the servants of Allah, the purified ones. [129]And We granted him among the later generations (the salutation): [130]Peace be on Elias![c] [131]Thus do We reward the doers of good. [132]Surely he was one of Our believing servants.

133 And Lot was surely one of the messengers. [134]When We delivered him and his people, all — [135]except an old woman among those who remained behind. [136]Then We destroyed the others. [137]And surely you pass by them in the morning, [138]and at night. Do you not then understand?

Section 5: **Jonah and Holy Prophet's triumph**

139 And Jonah was surely one of the messengers. [140]When he fled to the laden ship,[d] [141]so he drew lots and was of those cast away.

***a* (113)** Abraham and Isaac are spoken of distinctly to show that by blessing Abraham is here meant blessing his descendants through Ishmael.

***b* (125)** Ba'l stands for the sun, or the sun-god.

***c* (130)** *Ilyāsīn,* the word used here, is only another form of the name of Ilyās or Elias. Elias is mentioned as being one of the prophets in 6:85 and is the same as the Elijah of the Bible.

***d* (140)** It is meaningless to say that Jonah fled from God. He was a prophet

142So the fish took him into its mouth[a] while he was blameable. 143But if he had not been of those who glorify (Us), 144he would have remained in its belly till the day when they are raised.[b] 145Then We cast him on the naked shore, while he was sick. 146And We caused a gourd plant to grow up for him. 147And We sent him to a hundred thousand (people) or more.[c] 148And they believed, so We gave them provision till a time.

149 Now ask them whether *y*our Lord has daughters and they have sons? 150Or did We create the angels females, while they witnessed? 151Now surely it is of their own lie that they say: 152Allah has offspring. And truly they are liars. 153Has He preferred daughters to sons? 154What is the matter with you? How do you judge! 155Will you not then be mindful? 156Or do you have a clear authority? 157Then bring your Book, if you are truthful.

158 And they assert a relationship between Him and the jinn.[d] And certainly the jinn know that they will be brought up (for judgment) — 159glory be to Allah from what they describe! —

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and knew that no one could flee from God, for God's kingdom is unlimited. Nor does the Quran say that he fled from God. It would appear that he fled from his people or from the king; see also 21:87 and footnotes.

***a* (142)** According to Jonah 1:17, Jonah was devoured by a fish. The word used in the Quran is *iltaqama*, which does not necessarily signify the act of devouring and means *he took into his mouth*. According to one explanation, his heel only was drawn by the fish into its mouth.

***b* (144)** The meaning is that the fish would have eaten him, and he would have died. By *the day when they are raised* is not meant the actual day of Resurrection, because the fish could not live to the day of Resurrection. A person's death is generally called the day of his resurrection in a certain sense.

***c* (147)** According to the Bible, the gourd gave shelter to Jonah, but the next day a worm damaged the plant so that it withered, and Jonah grieved for it. The lesson drawn from this incident is stated thus: "But the Lord said, You have had pity on the plant for which you have not laboured, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left" (Jonah 4:10–11). These were the hundred thousand or more persons to which Jonah was sent.

***d* (158)** They said that they considered the angels to be daughters of God and worshipped them. In the Quran, however, it is stated that it was really the jinn — their own leaders in evil — that they worshipped, not the angels; see 34:40–41.

[160]but not so the servants of Allah, the purified ones.[a] [161]So surely you and what you serve, [162]you cannot mislead (anyone) about Him, [163]except him who will burn in the flaming Fire. [164]And there is none of us but has an assigned place,[b] [165]and most surely we are ranged in ranks, [166]and we truly glorify (Him).

167 And surely they used to say: [168]If we had a reminder from the ancients, [169]we would have been sincere servants of Allah. [170]But (now) they disbelieve in it, so they will come to know. [171]And certainly Our word has already gone forth to Our servants, the messengers, [172]that they, surely they, will be helped, [173]and Our forces, surely they, will be triumphant. [174]So turn away from them till a time,[c] [175]and watch them, they too will see. [176]Would they hasten on Our punishment? [177]So when it descends in their court, evil will be the morning of those who were warned. [178]And turn away from them till a time, [179]and watch, for they too will see.

180 Glory be to *y*our Lord, the Lord of Might, above what they describe! [181]And peace be on the messengers! [182]And praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds!

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a **(160)** It is the evildoers that will be brought up for judgment (v. 158), not the servants of Allah.

b **(164)** These words are put into the mouth of the believers.

c **(174)** That is, the time of victory.

Chapter 38

Ṣād

The title of this chapter is taken from its initial letter *Ṣād* which stands for *Ṣādiq,* meaning here *Truthful God*. It describes the sufferings of prophets at the hands of their enemies but the *Truthful God* foretold the discomfiture of the enemy and the final triumph of truth. It relates the accounts of David and Solomon, who faced enmity despite being mighty kings, and then describes the tribulations of Job and his deliverance from them. The chapter ends with a mention of the typical opposition of the devil to the prophet-man. Chapters 34 to 39 form one group, belonging most probably to the middle period at Makkah.

Section 1: **The enemy's discomfiture**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Truthful God! By the Quran, possessing eminence![a] **2**But those who disbelieve are in self-exaltation and opposition. **3**How many a generation We destroyed before them, then they cried when there was no longer time for escape![b] **4**And they wonder that a warner from among themselves has come to them, and the disbelievers say: This is an enchanter, a liar. **5**Does he make the gods a single God? Surely this is a strange thing. **6**And the chiefs among them say: Go and steadily adhere to your gods; surely this is a thing intended.[c] **7**We never heard of this in the former faith, this is nothing but a forgery. **8**Has the Reminder been revealed to him from among us? Indeed, they are in doubt as to My Reminder. Indeed, they have not yet tasted My punishment.

9 Or, do they have the treasures of the mercy of *y*our Lord, the Mighty, the Great Giver? **10**Or is the kingdom of the heavens and

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a **(1)** *Dhikr* means *eminence* here, as in 2:152. The calling to witness of the Quran *possessing eminence* indicates that the truth of the Quran will become manifest by the eminence to which it will raise those who follow it.

b **(3)** That is, they did not heed the warning, but cried for help when punishment actually overtook them, and there was no escape from it.

c **(6)** By *a thing intended* is meant that it is a thing which the Prophet intends to bring about but which he cannot, or that the appearance of the Prophet is one of the disasters decreed by fate.

the earth and all that is between them theirs? Then let them rise higher in means.[a] 11What an army of the allies is here put to flight![b] 12The people of Noah, and Ād, and Pharaoh, the lord of armies, rejected (prophets) before them, 13and Thamūd and the people of Lot and the dwellers of the Grove. These were the parties (opposing Truth). 14Each one rejected the messengers, so just was My retribution.

Section 2: **David's enemies**

15 And these wait but for one cry, in which there is no delay. 16And they say: Our Lord, hasten on for us our portion (of punishment) before the day of Reckoning.[c] 17Bear patiently what they say, and remember Our servant David, the possessor of power. He ever turned (to Allah). 18Truly We made the mountains subject to him, glorifying (Allah) at nightfall and sunrise,[d] 19and the birds gathered together. All were obedient to him. 20And We strengthened his kingdom and We gave him wisdom and a clear judgment.

21 And has the story of the adversaries come to *y*ou? When they made an entry into the private chamber by climbing the wall — 22when they came upon David so he was afraid of them. They said: Do not fear; (we are) two litigants, one of whom has wronged the other, so decide between us with justice, and do not act unjustly, and guide us to the right way. 23This is my brother. He has ninety-nine ewes and I have a single ewe. Then he said, Make it over to me, and he has prevailed against me in dispute. 24He said: Surely

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a **(10)** Their *rising higher* or *ascending in means* stands for having recourse to all the means they can think of. As they were powerful in the land and masters of it, they should find the best means to retain their power, and prove the warning of the Prophet to be false. They would not be able to do so.

b **(11)** This is a prophecy relating to the discomfiture and overthrow of the opponents of Islam when they combine all possible forces against it. The Prophet is thus not only enjoined patience under his present sufferings, but he is further told that the opposition against him will assume yet more formidable proportions. He is comforted at the same time with the knowledge that the combined forces of opposition will be utterly routed and overthrown. This happened in the battle known as *the Battle of the Aḥzāb*, or the Battle of the Allies; see 33:22.

c **(16)** It is clearly a demand on the part of disbelievers for punishment in this life; they were again and again told that their doom was coming, and they wanted it to come immediately.

d **(18)** See 34:10 footnote 1.

he has wronged *y*ou in demanding *y*our ewe (to add) to his own ewes. And surely many partners wrong one another except those who believe and do good, and very few are they! And David knew that We had tried him, so he asked his Lord for protection, and he fell down bowing and turned (to God).[a] **25**So We gave him this protection, and surely he had a nearness to Us and an excellent destination.

26 O David, surely We have made *y*ou a ruler in the land; so judge between people justly, and do not follow desire that it should lead *y*ou astray from the path of Allah. Those who go astray from the path of Allah, for them is surely a severe punishment because they forgot the day of Reckoning.

Section 3: **Solomon and his enemies**

27 And We did not create the heaven and the earth and all that is between them in vain. That is the opinion of those who disbelieve. So woe to those who disbelieve on account of the Fire![b] **28**Shall We treat those who believe and do good like the mischief-makers in the earth? Or shall We make the dutiful like the wicked? **29**(This is) a Book that We have revealed to *y*ou abounding in good, that they may ponder over its verses, and that those who have understanding may be mindful.

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a **(24)** The men who thus attacked David by *climbing over the wall* were his enemies, as the Quran plainly states. They had thought of taking David unawares and putting him to death. But David, though terrified, was ready to meet them, and the two men, finding their plan thus frustrated, made an excuse for coming to him in such an unusual manner. The story of David committing adultery and two angels having come to him thus to remind him of the sin is a puerile falsehood, wherever it may be found. The word "protection" in this verse and the next by no means indicates that David had committed a sin, as the original word (*istighfār, ghafr*) really signifies the *seeking of protection* from sin. David sought Divine protection when he saw that his enemies had grown so bold against him. (*Editor's Note:* This dispute is also illustrative of the desire of large and powerful organizations to bring small ones under their sway. The Quran here supports the judgment given in favour of the rights of ownership of the weak against the strong.)

b **(27)** The believer is guided by the principle of the accountability of human actions and of a significance underlying everything that exists in heaven or earth. The disbeliever, on the other hand, makes mischief, as he believes that he will not be any the worse for it, and thus ignores the law of cause and effect, which prevails in the universe.

30 And We gave to David Solomon. Most excellent the servant! Surely he ever turned (to Allah). **31**When well-bred, swift (horses) were brought to him at evening — **32**so he said: I love the good things on account of the remembrance of my Lord — until they were hidden behind the veil. **33**(He said): Bring them back to me. So he began to stroke (their) legs and necks.

34 And certainly We tried Solomon, and We put on his throne a (mere) body,[a] so he turned (to Allah). **35**He said: My Lord, forgive me and grant me a kingdom which is not fit for anyone after me;[b] surely You are the Great Giver. **36**So We made the wind subservient to him, running gently by His command wherever he desired, **37**and the devils, every builder and diver, **38**and others fettered in chains.[c] **39**This is Our free gift, so give freely or withhold, without reckoning. **40**And surely he had a nearness to Us and an excellent destination.

Section 4: **Job — Triumph of the righteous**

41 And remember Our servant Job. When he cried to his Lord: The devil has afflicted me with toil and torment.[d] **42**Urge with

***a* (34)** By the *mere body* that was put on his throne is meant either his son Rehoboam, who lost the allegiance of all except a single tribe of Israel (1 Kings 12:17), or Jeroboam, who led the revolt against the house of David, and, on becoming king of ten tribes, set up image-worship in Dan and Beth-el, the two calves being supposed to be images of Jehovah (1 Kings 12:28), and also began the worship of molten images (1 Kings 14:9). Thus both Rehoboam and Jeroboam answer the description of a *body* (without real life) thrown on Solomon's throne. See also 34:14 footnote.

***b* (35)** The previous verse speaks of the imbecile heir-apparent to Solomon's throne. Hence we find Solomon praying here for a spiritual kingdom, for that is the only kingdom which is not in danger of being spoiled by an heir. The glory of Solomon's temporal kingdom was not maintained after his death; nor has a king like Solomon appeared in Israel. By *anyone after me* is meant *anyone in Israel*, not the whole world.

***c* (38)** The description given here of the devils shows clearly that the designation applies to men of foreign tribes subjected to Solomon's rule, because it was the latter who were forced into labour by Solomon. The words *every builder and diver* and *others fettered in chains* make it clear that the *jinn* and *devils* who are related to have been subjected to Solomon were only human beings. See also 34:12 footnote 3.

***d* (41)** The story of Job is given here as well as in the 21st chapter, being more brief there than here. All that the Quran states about him is that he was a

*y*our foot; here is a cool washing-place and a drink.[a] **43**And We gave him (back) his people and more like them with them,[b] a mercy from Us, and a reminder for those who have understanding. **44**And take in *y*our hand few worldly goods and earn goodness therewith and do not incline to falsehood.[c] Surely We found him patient; most excellent the servant! Surely he (ever) turned (to Us).

45 And remember Our servants Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, possessors of power and insight. **46**We indeed purified them by a pure quality, the keeping in mind of the (final) abode. **47**And surely they were with Us, among the elect, the best. **48**And remember Ishmael and Elisha and Dhu-l-Kifl; and they were all of the best.

49 This is a reminder. And surely there is an excellent destination for the dutiful: **50**Gardens of perpetuity — the doors are

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righteous person who suffered some kind of distress, remained patient under trials, and was ultimately delivered from affliction. The toil and torment of which Job complains seem to relate to some journey of his in a desert, where he finds himself in an evil plight, on account of the fatigue of the journey and the thirst which afflicts him. There are many circumstances which point to this conclusion: the use of the word *nuṣb*, signifying *toil* or *fatigue;* his being led to a place where he finds a cool washing-place and a drink; and the mention of the devil (*shaiṭān*) in connection with his trouble, for *shaiṭān al-falā*, lit., *the devil of the desert*, signifies *thirst*. The mention of this distressing journey of Job contains, no doubt, a hint to the Prophet's long journey from Makkah to Madinah, which was to be undertaken under particularly distressing circumstances. This journey of Job was undoubtedly undertaken in connection with the delivery of the message with which he was entrusted, just as in the case of the Holy Prophet's emigration.

a **(42)** The meaning is *urge your horse to go further*, and the result is that there he finds a place where he is able to refresh himself both with drink and washing. He thought that he was in a waterless desert, and in reply to his prayer he is told to urge his horse or the beast he rode upon to trot further on, where he will find rest. It is a lesson not to despair under difficulties.

b **(43)** The *giving* of his people or his family to him means that he met them again. The *more like them with them* are his *followers*. As I have already stated, there is a prophetical reference to the Prophet's Flight in Job's journey, and the Prophet again met not only his followers who fled from Makkah, but found also *more like them* at Madinah, i.e., the *Anṣār* ('Helpers') of Madinah.

c **(44)** Usually these words are translated thus: "Take in your hand a branch and strike with it and do not break the oath". To explain these words, a story is added about his wife's impatience and Job's oath in that connection, but this story has no basis. The word *dighth* means not only a *handful of twigs* or *shrubs* but also a *handful of worldly goods*. The word *ḍarb* (strike) carries a number of significances. Job was a rich man and hence he is here told not to be inclined too much to the attainment of worldly riches. They are only needed to the extent of enabling a man to earn goodness thereby.

opened for them.[a] **51**Reclining therein, calling therein for many fruits and drink. **52**And with them are those modest in gaze, equals in age.[b] **53**This is what you are promised for the day of Reckoning. **54**Surely this is Our sustenance; it will never come to an end — **55**this (is for the good)! And surely there is an evil destination for the inordinate — **56**hell. They will enter it. And evil is the resting-place. **57**This — so let them taste it: boiling and intensely cold (drink),[c] **58**and other similar (punishment), of various sorts. **59**This is an army rushing headlong with you[d] — no welcome for them! Surely they will burn in fire. **60**They say:[e] Rather (it is) you — no welcome to you! You prepared it for us. And evil is the resting-place. **61**They say: Our Lord, whoever prepared it for us, give him more, a double, punishment in the Fire. **62**And they say: What is the matter with us — we do not see men whom we used to count among the wicked? **63**Did we (only) take them in scorn, or do our eyes miss them? **64**That surely is the truth — the contending among themselves of the inmates of the Fire.

Section 5: **Opposition to prophets**

65 Say: I am only a warner; and there is no god but Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all) — **66**the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, the Mighty, the Forgiving. **67**Say: It is a message of importance,[f] **68**from which you turn away. **69**I have

***a* (50)** That is, the doors of these gardens are opened for them in this very life; or, they are always open to them.

***b* (52)** For the *modest in gaze,* see 37:49 footnote. Here, in addition, they are called *equals in age,* as showing that their growth begins with the growth of spiritual life in a human being, thus showing that they are the fruits of good deeds, whether done by males or females, who would all have these fruits equally.

***c* (57)** They will be made to consume intensely hot and intensely cold drink, because they went to the two extremes and did not follow the mean.

***d* (59)** This is the army of blind followers of falsehood.

***e* (60)** The speakers here are the blind followers, those addressed being the ringleaders.

***f* (67)** The message of importance is the Prophet's message to the whole of humanity, the message which discloses the vast spiritual realm hidden to the ordinary human eye. That those who turn away from it are doomed to perdition is the necessary consequence, and hence the doom of the opponents forms part of this message.

no knowledge of the exalted chiefs when they contend.[a] [70]Only this is revealed to me that I am a plain warner.

71 When *y*our Lord said to the angels: Surely I am going to create a mortal from dust.[b] [72]So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down submitting to him. [73]And the angels submitted, all of them, [74]but not Iblīs.[c] He was proud and he was one of the disbelievers. [75]He said: O Iblīs, what prevented *y*ou from submitting to him whom I created with both My hands? Are *y*ou proud or are *y*ou one of the exalted ones? [76]He said: I am better than he; You have created me of fire, and him You did create of dust.[d] [77]He said: Go forth from here! Surely *y*ou are driven away, [78]and surely My curse is on *y*ou to the day of Judgment.

79 He said: My Lord, grant me respite till the day when they are raised.[e] [80]He said: Surely *y*ou are granted respite, [81]till the day of the time made known. [82]He said: Then, by Your Might! I will surely lead them all astray, [83]except Your servants from among them, the purified ones. [84]He said: The truth is — and the truth I speak — [85]that I shall fill hell with *y*ou and with all those among them who follow *y*ou.

86 Say: I ask you no reward for it; nor am I one of the impostors. [87]It is nothing but a Reminder for the nations. [88]And certainly you will come to know about it after a time.

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a **(69)** The exalted chiefs are the heavenly beings who come first to know of the Divine decree relating to the punishment of the opponents of Truth, referred to in v. 68. It is these opponents that are spoken of here as *contending*; they carried on a contention against Truth.

b **(71)** The creation of Adam and the submission of the angels typifies the raising of a prophet and the submission to him of the good and the righteous.

c **(74)** See 2:34.

d **(76)** The creation from fire is an indication of rebelliousness, of a fiery temper, and the creation from dust signifies submissiveness and meekness; see 7:12.

e **(79)** See 15:36.

Chapter 39

Al-Zumar The Companies

The title of this chapter refers to two classes, the believers and the disbelievers (v. 71, 73). It begins by emphasizing sincere obedience to Allah and refers to those who obey and those who refuse to obey. Then it shows that the Quran is a perfect guidance whose rejectors will meet with punishment. Although this will not be averted from those who persist in rejection, yet the door of Divine mercy will remain open for even the greatest sinners who need not despair. At the end the chapter speaks of the coming of the judgment when each of the two companies is made to taste what it deserves. Chapters 34 to 39 form one group, belonging most probably to the middle period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Obedience to Allah**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. **2**Surely We have revealed to *y*ou the Book with truth, so serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience. **3**Now surely sincere obedience is due to Allah (alone). And those who choose protectors besides Him (say): We serve them only that they may bring us nearer to Allah.[a] Surely Allah will judge between them in that in which they differ. Surely Allah does not guide him who is a liar, ungrateful. **4**If Allah desired to take a son to Himself, He could have chosen those He pleased out of those whom He has created — Glory be to Him! He is Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all).[b]

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a **(3)** All worshippers of false deities claim that such deities are worshipped only to get nearer to God, as if God Himself were unapproachable. The idol-worshippers say that the idols are only symbols for concentration on God, while the Christians, plainly spoken of in the next verse, hold that without the Son they can have no access to God. But undue reverence of created things is a step leading to degradation of human nature. Hence it is that Islam requires sincere obedience to, or worship of, God alone.

b **(4)** We find the Christian doctrine referred to and refuted in very early Makkan revelations, such as the 19th chapter. The Quran refers to the error of attributing a son to the Divine Being almost as frequently as to the setting up of idols. It is pointed out here that no one holds a relation of sonship to Allah, but that it is His chosen servants that are metaphorically called His sons, because in

5 He has created the heavens and the earth with truth; He makes the night cover the day and makes the day overtake the night, and He has made the sun and the moon subservient; each one moves on to an assigned term. Now surely He is the Mighty, the Forgiver. **6**He created you from a single being, then made its mate of the same (kind). And He sent down for you eight of the cattle in pairs.[a] He creates you in the wombs of your mothers — creation after creation — in triple darkness. That is Allah, your Lord; His is the kingdom. There is no God but He. How are you then turned away (from truth)?

7 If you are ungrateful, then surely Allah is above need of you. And He does not like ungratefulness in His servants. And if you are grateful, He likes it for you. And no bearer of a burden will bear another's burden. Then to your Lord is your return, then will He inform you of what you did. Surely He is Knower of what is in the hearts. **8**And when distress afflicts a man he calls upon his Lord, turning to Him; then when He grants him a favour from Him, he forgets that for which he called upon Him before, and sets up rivals to Allah that he may cause (others) to stray from His path. Say: Enjoy *y*our ungratefulness for a little; surely *y*ou are among the companions of the Fire. **9**What of him who is obedient during hours of the night, prostrating himself and standing, taking care of the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord? Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only those who have understanding are mindful.

Section 2: **Believers and disbelievers**

10 Say: O My servants who believe, keep your duty to your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and Allah's earth is spacious.[b] Truly the steadfast will be paid their reward

being manifestations of the Divine attributes they stand to Allah in the same relation as a son stands to a father, being images of His attributes as a son is the image of a father.

***a* (6)** The word *anzala* is not only applied to the actual sending down of a thing, but also to making it accessible to people, just as iron (57:25) and clothing (7:26) are spoken of as having been "sent down". It is in this sense that the cattle are spoken of here as being sent down for people. The eight of the cattle are the four pairs spoken of in 6:143–144. The four animals are mentioned particularly as being most useful for man.

***b* (10)** The words are a comfort to the Muslims, who were subjected to sufferings in their own land, and give them the assurance that, if suppressed in one land, Islam will prosper in other lands.

without measure. [11]Say: I am commanded to serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience, [12]and I am commanded to be the first of those who submit. [13]Say: I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a grievous day. [14]Say: Allah I serve, being sincere to Him in my obedience. [15]Serve then what you will besides Him. Say: The losers surely are those who lose themselves and their people on the day of Resurrection. Now surely that is the manifest loss! [16]They shall have coverings of fire above them and coverings beneath them. With that Allah makes His servants to fear; so keep your duty to Me, O My servants.

17 And those who shun the worship of the idols and turn to Allah, for them is good news. So give good news to My servants, [18]who listen to the Word, then follow the best of it. Such are they whom Allah has guided, and such are they who have understanding. [19]He against whom the sentence of punishment is due — can *y*ou save him who is in the Fire? [20]But those who keep their duty to their Lord, for them are high places, above which are yet higher places,[a] built (for them), in which rivers flow. (It is) the promise of Allah. Allah does not fail in (His) promise.

21 Do *y*ou not see that Allah sends down water from the clouds, then makes it go down into the earth in springs, then brings forth with it vegetation of various colours; then it withers so that *y*ou see it turn yellow, then He makes it chaff?[b] Surely there is a reminder in this for those who have understanding.

Section 3: **A perfect Guidance**

22 Is he whose heart Allah has opened to Islam so that he follows a light from his Lord — (like the hard-hearted)? So woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah! Such are in clear error. [23]Allah has revealed the best announcement,

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a **(20)** This shows that in the Hereafter, and in this life as well, there is an unceasing progress, for the high places to which the righteous attain have places still higher above them.

b **(21)** The allusion is to the fate of nations; they are brought into existence, made to rise, then decay and are swept out of existence. Even Muslim nations are subject to the same law, but Islam itself, being a law of life, is not subject to decay. The place of one nation that decays is taken by another. Moreover, nations that decay because of their transgressions may again be raised to life by turning to righteousness.

a Book consistent, repeating (its injunctions),[a] at which do shudder the skins of those who fear their Lord, then their skins and their hearts soften to Allah's remembrance. This is Allah's guidance — He guides with it whom He pleases. And he whom Allah leaves in error, there is no guide for him.

24 What of him who has to guard himself with his own person against the evil punishment of the day of Resurrection? And it will be said to the wrongdoers: Taste what you earned. **25**Those before them denied, so the punishment came to them from where they did not perceive. **26**So Allah made them taste disgrace in this world's life; and certainly the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if only they knew!

27 And certainly We have set forth for people in this Quran examples of every sort that they may be mindful.[b] **28**An Arabic Quran without any crookedness, that they may guard against evil. **29**Allah sets forth a parable: A man belonging to partners differing with one another, and a man (devoted) wholly to one man. Are the two alike in condition? Praise be to Allah! But most of them do not know. **30**Surely *y*ou will die and they (too) will die; **31**then surely on the day of Resurrection you will contend with one another before your Lord.

Section 4: **Rejectors will be disgraced**

Part 24

32 Who is, then, more unjust than he who utters a lie against Allah and denies the truth when it comes to him? Is there not in hell an abode for the disbelievers? **33**And he who brings the truth and accepts the truth — such are the dutiful. **34**They shall have with

***a* (23)** The Quran was revealed by portions during a period of twenty-three years, and during this period the circumstances under which the Holy Prophet lived were of such a varied nature that the history of no other man offers a similar combination of varying circumstances. Yet, through all these vicissitudes, the Quran shows a strict uniformity. The consistency of its various parts, however, signifies more than a mere uniformity; it signifies that some parts explain other parts. It is also called *repeating* here because it repeats over and over again the most important subjects, especially the Unity of the Divine Being and the accountability of human actions. See also 3:7.

***b* (27)** The Quran repeatedly claims to be a complete collection of the best teachings for the moral and spiritual welfare of mankind. Here it claims to be a perfect book, as not only containing all the necessary teachings, but also answering all the objections of its opponents; see 17:89 and 25:33.

their Lord what they please. Such is the reward of the doers of good — **35**that Allah may ward off from them the worst of what they did, and give them their reward for the best of what they did.[a]

36 Is not Allah sufficient for His servant? And they seek to frighten *y*ou with those (whom they worship) besides Him.[b] And whomsoever Allah leaves in error, there is no guide for him. **37**And whom Allah guides, there is none that can lead him astray. Is not Allah Mighty, the Lord of retribution? **38**And if *y*ou ask them, Who created the heavens and the earth, they will say: Allah. Say: Do you then see that those you call upon besides Allah, would they, if Allah desire to afflict me with harm, remove His harm? Or if He desire to show me mercy, could they withhold His mercy? Say: Allah is sufficient for me. On Him do the reliant rely. **39**Say: My people, work in your place. Surely I am a worker, so you will soon come to know, **40**who it is to whom a punishment comes, disgracing him, and on whom falls a lasting punishment.[c]

41 Surely We have revealed to *y*ou the Book with truth for (the good of) people. So whoever goes aright, it is for his own soul, and whoever goes astray, goes astray only to its detriment. And *y*ou are not in charge of them.

Section 5: **Punishment cannot be averted**

42 Allah takes souls (of human beings) at the time of their death, and of those that do not die (He takes) during their sleep. Then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed time.[d] Surely there

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a **(35)** The Quran brought about an unprecedented revolution in the world. People who took pride in doing evil deeds now aspired to deeds of righteousness. They were thus turned away from the worst deeds to the best. This verse prophetically refers to this great change.

b **(36)** The superstitious Arabs no doubt believed that their idols could do harm to people who did not admit their authority.

c **(40)** Two kinds of punishment are plainly spoken of, viz., the punishment that will bring disgrace, which is clearly the punishment of this life, and the lasting punishment that the wicked receive in the life after death. The first of these demonstrates the truth of the other.

d **(42)** It is clear that it is not the animal soul that is taken away in sleep; it is the soul that stands for human consciousness. In death both are taken away. The statement further makes it clear that the word *tawaffā* is applied to the taking

are signs in this for a people who reflect. **43**Or, do they take intercessors besides Allah? Say: What! Even though they control nothing, nor do they understand. **44**Say: Allah's is the intercession altogether. His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. Then to Him you will be returned.

45 And when Allah alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter shrink, and when those besides Him are mentioned — lo! — they are joyful.[a] **46**Say: O Allah, Originator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the unseen and the seen, You will judge between Your servants in that in which they differ. **47**And if those who do wrong had all that is in the earth and as much as it again, they would certainly offer it as ransom from the evil of the punishment on the day of Resurrection. And what they never thought of shall become plain to them from Allah.[b] **48**And the evil (consequences) of what they earned will become plain to them,[c] and what they mocked at will beset them.

49 So when harm afflicts man he calls upon Us; then, when We grant him a favour from Us, he says: I have been given it only by means of (my) knowledge. No, it is a trial, but most of them do not know. **50**Those before them did say it indeed, but what they earned did not avail them. **51**So the evil which they had earned befell them. And those who do wrong from among these, the evil which they earn shall befall them (also), and they shall not escape.[d] **52**Do they not know that Allah amplifies provision for whom He pleases, and restricts (it also); surely there are signs in this for a people who believe.

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of the soul and not to the removal of the body from one place to another. See also 21:95 and 23:100.

a **(45)** Elsewhere the Quran says: "And most of them do not believe in Allah without setting up partners (with Him)" (12:106).

b **(47)** *What they never thought of* signifies the overthrow of their power in this life and the manifestation of the evil results of their deeds in the Hereafter.

c **(48)** The fact that the heaven and hell of the next life are only manifestations of the spiritual realities of this life is stated here in clear language. The evil consequences of what they do are hidden from the eye in this life, but they shall *become plain* in the next life.

d **(51)** Wonderful indeed is the certainty of the tone in which these prophecies are worded, when all around there was not a single ray of hope for Islam, and its enemies were in the ascendant.

Section 6: **Divine mercy**

53 Say: O My servants who have been reckless against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives sins altogether. He is indeed the Forgiving, the Merciful.[a] **54**And turn to your Lord and submit to Him before punishment comes to you, then you will not be helped. **55**And follow the best that has been revealed to you from your Lord[b] before punishment comes to you all of a sudden, while you do not perceive — **56**that a soul should say: O woe is me, that I fell short of my duty to Allah! — and surely I was one of those who scoffed — **57**or it should say: If Allah had guided me, I should have been dutiful; **58**or it should say, when it sees the punishment: If I had another chance I should be a doer of good. **59**Yes, My messages did come to *y*ou, but *y*ou rejected them, and were proud and were among the disbelievers.

60 And on the day of Resurrection *y*ou will see those who lied against Allah, their faces will be darkened. Is there not in hell an abode for the proud? **61**And Allah delivers those who keep their duty with their achievement — harm does not touch them, nor do they grieve. **62**Allah is the Creator of all things and He has charge over everything. **63**His are the treasures of the heavens and the earth. And those who disbelieve in the messages of Allah, such are the losers.

Section 7: **The Final Judgment**

64 Say: Do you tell me to serve others than Allah, you ignorant ones? **65**And certainly it has been revealed to *y*ou and to those before *y*ou: If *y*ou set up partners (with Allah), *y*our work would surely come to nothing and *y*ou would be a loser. **66**No, serve Allah alone and be one of the thankful.

67 And they do not honour Allah with the honour due to Him; and the whole earth will be in His grip on the day of Resurrection

a **(53)** Stress is laid on the mercy and love of Allah in all religions, but these great Divine attributes find their true and final expression in Islam. This verse discloses the all-comprehensive mercy of Allah, before which the sins of people become quite insignificant.

b **(55)** *Best* stands for the revelation of the Quran. God has ever been revealing His will to mankind, but the Quran, being the final expression of His will, is the best revelation that has been sent to people.

and the heavens rolled up in His right hand. Glory be to Him, and supremely exalted is He above what they set up as partners (with Him)! **68**And the trumpet is blown, so all those in the heavens and all those in the earth will swoon, except such as Allah please. Then it will be blown again, when — lo! — they stand up, awaiting.[a] **69**And the earth beams with the light of its Lord, and the Book is laid down, and the prophets and the witnesses are brought up, and judgment is given between them with justice, and they are not wronged.[b] **70**And every soul is paid back fully for what it did, and He knows best what they do.

Section 8: **Each group meets with its desert**

71 And those who disbelieve are driven to hell in companies; until, when they come to it, its doors are opened, and its keepers say to them: Did not messengers come to you from among you reciting to you the messages of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this day of yours? They say: Yes indeed. But the word of punishment proved true against the disbelievers. **72**It is said: Enter the gates of hell to abide in it; and evil is the abode of the proud.

73 And those who keep their duty to their Lord are conveyed to the Garden in companies until, when they come to it, its doors are opened and its keepers say to them: Peace be on you, you led pure lives; so enter it to abide. **74**And they say: Praise be to Allah! — Who has made good to us His promise, and He has made us

***a* (68)** See 6:73 footnote 2. Here it is stated that the trumpet is blown twice: at the first blowing all swoon, and at the second blowing they all stand up, waiting to receive the judgment. A general destruction is thus followed by a resurrection. In the case of the spiritual resurrection, the destruction signifies the destruction of the old order.

***b* (69)** The beaming of the earth with the light of its Lord in the Resurrection is in reference to the clear manifestation of the consequences of the deeds which remain generally hidden in this life. The laying down of the Book refers to the passing of the judgment on the good and the evil according to their deserts. The prophets and the witnesses are brought up, these being the people who sow the seeds of virtue and turn people's minds to God. Prophets were sent to every nation, and the followers of the Prophet Muhammad, who take the place of the previous prophets in turning people's minds to God, are the witnesses spoken of here; they are specially mentioned by this name in 2:143. A deeper reference to the spiritual resurrection is evident throughout.

inherit the land; we abide in the Garden where we please. How excellent is the reward of the workers![a] **75**And *y*ou see the angels going round about the Throne of Power, glorifying their Lord with praise. And they are judged with justice, and it is said: Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds!

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a **(74)** Never was prophecy uttered in clearer terms, nor in more adverse circumstances. The day must come, we are here told, when the believers will praise God for making them inherit the land. Within fifteen years of this prophecy they were made masters of Arabia, and within another five they were made to inherit the Holy Land. Note, further, how the prophecies of triumph in this life are combined with the Resurrection in which the righteous are to receive the mighty spiritual blessings in full manifestation.

Chapter 40

Al-Mu'min The Believer

The title of this chapter is taken from the mention of a *believer* in Moses from among Pharaoh's people (v. 28) who pleaded for Moses when Pharaoh wanted to kill him. Chapters 40 to 46 form a group all beginning with the letters *Ḥā Mīm,* and belong to the middle period at Makkah when persecution of Muslims had begun. These chapters offer solace to Muslims, warn their persecutors and foretell the triumph of truth over opposition. This chapter begins with the mention of the Divine plan for the protection of the faithful and goes on to speak of the eventual failure of the opponents. This warning is illustrated from the history of Moses. The chapter then reiterates that prophets of God and believers in them are always helped against their opponents, mentions that nothing is impossible before the power of Allah and warns the disbelievers that their opposition to the truth will end in failure.

Section 1: **Protection of the faithful**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Beneficent God![a] **2**The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Mighty, the Knowing, **3**Forgiver of sin and Acceptor of repentance, Severe to punish, Lord of bounty.[b] There is no God but He; to Him is the eventual coming.

4 None dispute concerning the messages of Allah but those who disbelieve, so do not let their control in the land deceive *y*ou. **5**Before them the people of Noah and the parties after them rejected (prophets), and every nation purposed against its messenger to destroy him, and disputed by means of falsehood to refute thereby the truth, so I seized them; how (terrible) was then My retribution! **6**And thus did the word of *y*our Lord prove true against those who disbelieve, that they are the companions of the Fire.

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a **(1)** This verse consists of the two letters *ḥā* and *mīm.* These may stand for the Divine name *Al-Raḥmān,* i.e., the Beneficent. They may also be abbreviations for *Ḥamīd* (Praised) and *Majīd* (Glorious), or for *Ḥayy* (the Living) and *Qayyūm* (the Self-subsisting), or for *Raḥmān* (Beneficent) and *Raḥīm* (Merciful).

b **(3)** Of the four attributes, the first two and the last refer to Divine forgiveness, mercy and bounty, while only one refers to punishment of evil, and thus the attribute of mercy preponderates even when punishment is spoken of.

7 Those who bear the Throne of Power and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask protection for those who believe:[a] Our Lord, You embrace all things in mercy and knowledge,[b] so protect those who turn (to You) and follow Your way, and save them from the punishment of hell. **8**Our Lord, make them enter the Gardens of perpetuity, which You have promised them and such of their fathers and their wives and their offspring as are good.[c] Surely You are the Mighty, the Wise; **9**and guard them from evil, and whom You guard from evil this day, You have indeed mercy on him. And that is the mighty achievement.

Section 2: **Failure of opponents**

10 Those who disbelieve are told: Certainly Allah's hatred (of you), when you were called upon to the faith and you rejected, was much greater than your hatred (now) of yourselves.[d] **11**They say: Our Lord, twice have You made us die, and twice have You given us life;[e] so we confess our sins. Is there then a way of escape? **12**That is because when Allah alone was called upon, you disbelieved, and when partners were set up with Him, you believed. So judgment belongs to Allah, the High, the Great.

13 He it is Who shows you His signs and sends down for you sustenance from heaven,[f] and none is mindful but he who turns (to Him). **14**So call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience,

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***a* (7-1)** Those *who bear the 'arsh* or the Throne of Power are not the bearers of any material thing; see 7:54 footnote 2, for *'arsh*. Generally the words are explained as meaning angels, but may refer to bearers of Divine messages, i.e., the prophets, while those around it are the faithful who, walking in the footsteps of the prophets, carry the Divine message to the world. See also 69:17 footnote.

***b* (7-2)** Here we are told that Divine mercy is as comprehensive as Divine knowledge, and they both extend over all things.

***c* (8)** The wives and offspring of the faithful, those of them who do good, are here mentioned as entering paradise along with them.

***d* (10)** The violent hatred referred to is the hatred of the evildoers for themselves, when the evil consequences of their evil deeds become manifest to them. How much greater must have been the hatred of Allah, the Fountain-head of purity, for them when they committed those deeds! How Forbearing and Merciful was He not to visit them with immediate punishment!

***e* (11)** The first state of death is the state of nothingness from which man is brought into existence, the second life being the life after death.

***f* (13)** The meaning is simply that *God provides the means of sustenance*; or, the sustenance from heaven means the spiritual sustenance.

though the disbelievers are averse. **15**Exalter of degrees, Lord of the Throne of Power, He casts the spirit by His command upon whom He pleases of His servants, that he may warn (people) of the day of Meeting [a] — **16**the day when they come forth. Nothing concerning them remains hidden from Allah.[b] To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all). **17**This day every soul is rewarded for what it has earned. No injustice this day! Surely Allah is Swift in Reckoning.

18 And warn them of the day that draws near, when hearts, grieving inwardly, rise up to the throats.[c] The wrongdoers will have no friend, nor any intercessor who should be obeyed. **19**He knows the dishonesty of eyes and what the hearts conceal. **20**And Allah judges with truth. And those whom they call upon besides Him judge not at all! Surely Allah is the Hearing, the Seeing.

Section 3: **A warning in Moses' history**

21 Have they not travelled in the land and seen what was the end of those who were before them? Mightier than these were they in strength and in fortifications in the land, but Allah destroyed them for their sins. And they had none to protect them from Allah. **22**That was because their messengers had come to them with clear arguments, but they disbelieved, so Allah destroyed them. Surely He is Strong, Severe in retribution.

23 And certainly We sent Moses with Our messages and clear authority, **24**to Pharaoh and Hāmān and Korah,[d] but they said: A lying enchanter! **25**So when he brought to them the Truth from Us,

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a **(15)** The *rūḥ* (spirit) is here spoken of as being granted only to the elect, and the object is to warn people; hence *rūḥ* means Divine revelation, not the soul which is given to every human being. By the day of Meeting is meant the day of meeting with God.

b **(16)** It is implied that the hidden consequences of deeds will be made manifest on that day, for from Allah nothing is hidden.

c **(18)** In *the day that draws near,* the nearer punishment of this life is spoken of. The verse depicts the state of the hearts of the disbelievers on the day of their vanquishment.

d **(24)** The words do not indicate that the message to Pharaoh and Hāmān and Korah was given at one and the same time. All that is meant is that these three were the chief men who did not accept his message and they were destroyed.

they said:[a] Kill the sons of those who believe with him and keep their women alive. And the plot of the disbelievers is bound to fail. **26**And Pharaoh said: Leave me to kill Moses and let him call upon his Lord. Surely I fear that he will change your religion or that he will make mischief to appear in the land. **27**And Moses said: Truly I seek refuge in my Lord and your Lord from every proud one who does not believe in the day of Reckoning.

Section 4: **A believer of Pharaoh's people**

28 And a believing man of Pharaoh's people, who hid his faith, said: Will you kill a man because he says, My Lord is Allah, and indeed he has brought you clear arguments from your Lord? And if he is a liar, on him will be his lie, but if he is truthful, some of what he threatens you with will afflict you.[b] Surely Allah does not guide one who exceeds all bounds, a liar. **29**My people, yours is the kingdom this day, being masters in the land, but who will help us against the punishment of Allah, if it comes to us? Pharaoh said: I only show you what I see and I guide you only to the right way.

30 And he who believed said: My people, surely I fear for you the like of what befell the parties, **31**the like of what befell the people of Noah and Ād and Thamūd and those after them.[c] And Allah wishes no injustice for (His) servants. **32**And, my people, I fear for you the day of Calling out[d] — **33**the day on which you will turn back retreating, having none to save you from Allah; and whomsoever Allah leaves in error, there is no guide for him.**34**And Joseph indeed came to you before with clear arguments, but you ever remained in doubt as to what he brought you; until, when he died, you said: Allah will never raise a messenger after him. Thus does Allah leave him in error who exceeds all bounds, a doubter —

a **(25)** A perusal of the verses that follow will show that the speaker here is only Pharaoh, as advised by his chiefs, both he and Hāmān being mentioned by name, the latter in v. 36, while no mention is made of Korah.

b **(28)** *Some of what* they are threatened with, will afflict them, because the mercy of Allah wards off some of the deserved punishment.

c **(31)** There is nothing extraordinary in an Egyptian knowing how certain people on the borders of Arabia perished.

d **(32)** *Yaum al-tanād,* the words used here, mean "the day of calling out *to one another*", i.e., the day of distress on which one will call out to the other for help, none being able to help himself or another. Every day of distress is *the day of calling out*, and the description need not be limited to the day of Judgment.

[35]those who dispute concerning the messages of Allah without any authority that has come to them. Greatly hated is it by Allah and by those who believe. Thus does Allah seal every heart, of a proud, insolent one.

36 And Pharaoh said: Hāmān, build for me a tower that I may attain the means of access — [37]the means of access to the heavens, then reach the God of Moses, and I surely think him to be liar.[a] And thus the evil of his deed was made to seem good to Pharaoh, and he was turned aside from the way. And the plot of Pharaoh ended only in ruin.

Section 5: **The end of Pharaoh's people**

38 And he who believed said: My people, follow me, I will guide you to the right way. [39]My people, this life of the world is but a (passing) enjoyment, and the Hereafter, that is the abode to settle. [40]Whoever does evil, he is recompensed only with its like; and whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, these shall enter the Garden, to be given sustenance in it without measure. [41]And my people, how is it that I call you to salvation and you call me to the Fire? [42]You call me to disbelieve in Allah and to set up with Him partners of which I have no knowledge, and I call you to the Mighty, the Forgiving. [43]Without doubt, what you call me to has no claim to being invoked in this world, or in the Hereafter, and our return is to Allah, and those who exceed all bounds are companions of the Fire. [44]So you will remember what I say to you, and I entrust my affair to Allah. Surely Allah is Seer of the servants.

45 So Allah protected him from the evil that they planned; and evil punishment befell Pharaoh's people — [46]the Fire. They are brought before it (every) morning and evening, and on the day when the Hour comes to pass: Make Pharaoh's people enter the most severe punishment.

47 And when they contend with one another in the Fire, the weak saying to those who were proud: Surely we were your followers; will you then avert from us a portion of the Fire? [48]Those who were proud say: Now we are all in it, Allah has indeed judged between the servants. [49]And those in the Fire will say to the keepers

***a* (37)** As Moses spoke of the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Pharaoh mocked at the idea by suggesting that he would build a tower to find Moses' God.

of hell: Pray to your Lord to lighten our punishment for a day. **50**They will say: Did not your messengers come to you with clear arguments? They will say: Yes, indeed. They will say: Then pray. And the prayer of the disbelievers only goes astray.

Section 6: **Messengers receive Divine help**

51 We certainly help Our messengers, and those who believe, in this world's life and on the day when the witnesses arise [a] — **52**the day on which their excuse will not benefit the unjust, and for them is a curse and for them is the evil abode.

53 And We indeed gave Moses the guidance, and We made the Children of Israel inherit the Book — **54**a guidance and a reminder for those who have understanding. **55**So be patient; surely the promise of Allah is true; and ask protection for *y*our sin[b] and celebrate the praise of *y*our Lord in the evening and the morning.

56 Those who dispute about the messages of Allah without any authority having come to them, there is nothing in their hearts but (a desire) to become great, which they will never attain. So seek refuge in Allah. Surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing. **57**Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind; but most people do not know.[c] **58**And the blind and the

***a* (51)** The emphatic promise that the Prophet will be helped in this life, too, was made at a time when he was being persecuted, and there was not the least indication that his powerful opponents would be vanquished.

***b* (55)** These words, occurring here and in 47:19, do not negative the claim made repeatedly that the Prophet was sinless. Five times the Holy Prophet is described in the Quran as being one who purified others from sin (2:129, 2:151, 3:164, 9:103, 62:2). How could a sinful man purify others from sins? Again, he is repeatedly spoken of as walking in the way of perfect righteousness and entire submission to Allah. In fact, the Quran does not allow us to attribute sin to any prophet: "They do not speak before He speaks, and according to His command they act" (21:27).

The words used here (*istighfār* and *dhanb*) not only signify asking for *forgiveness of sins*, but also asking for *covering of sin*, which is really the *seeking of protection against sin*. What the Prophet is asked to seek is a protection from the imperfections of human nature, which make a person liable to sin unless he is protected by Allah. (*Editor's Note:* It may be the reader of the Quran who is primarily addressed in the words of this verse.)

***c* (57)** Man is insignificant as compared with the vast creation of the heavens and the earth, yet he considers himself so great that he would not bow his head before the great Creator of this vast creation.

seeing are not alike, nor those who believe and do good and the evildoers. Little mindful are you! [59]The Hour is surely coming — there is no doubt in it — but most people do not believe. [60]And your Lord says: Pray to Me, I will answer you. Those who disdain My service will surely enter hell, humiliated.

Section 7: **The power of Allah**

61 Allah is He Who made for you the night for resting in and the day for seeing. Surely Allah is full of grace to mankind, but most people do not give thanks. [62]That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of all things. There is no God but He. How are you then turned away (from truth)! [63]Thus are turned away those who deny the messages of Allah.

64 Allah is He Who made the earth a resting-place for you and the heaven a structure, and He formed you, then made goodly your forms, and He provided you with good things. That is Allah, your Lord — so blessed is Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [65]He is the Living, there is no God but He; so call on Him, being sincere to Him in obedience. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds!

66 Say: I am forbidden to serve those whom you call upon besides Allah, when clear arguments have come to me from my Lord; and I am commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds. [67]He it is Who created you from dust, then from a small life-germ, then from a clot, then He brings you forth as a child, then that you may attain your maturity, then that you may be old; and of you are some who die before and that you may reach an appointed term, and that you may understand. [68]He it is Who gives life and causes death, so when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, Be, and it is.

Section 8: **The end of opposition**

69 Do *y*ou not see those who dispute concerning the messages of Allah? How are they turned away (from truth) — [70]those who reject the Book and that with which We have sent Our messengers. But they shall soon know. [71]When the fetters are on their necks and the chains. They are dragged [72]into hot water; then in the Fire they are burned. [73]Then it is said to them: Where are those that you used to set up (as gods) [74]besides Allah? They will say: They have failed us; rather, we did not call upon anything before. Thus does Allah make the disbelievers perplexed.

75 That is because you exulted in the land unjustly and because you behaved insolently. **76**Enter the gates of hell to abide in it; and evil is the abode of the proud. **77**Therefore be patient, surely the promise of Allah is true. But whether We show *y*ou part of what We promise them, or cause *y*ou to die (before it), to Us shall they be returned.[a] **78**And certainly We sent messengers before *y*ou — among them are those We have mentioned to *y*ou and among them are those We have not mentioned to *y*ou. Nor was it possible for a messenger to bring a sign except with Allah's permission; so when Allah's command comes, judgment is given with truth, and those who treat (it) as a lie are lost.

Section 9: **The end of opposition**

79 Allah is He Who made the cattle for you that you may ride on some of them, and some of them you eat. **80**And there are advantages in them for you, and that you may attain through them (many) a need which is in your hearts,[b] and on them and on ships you are borne. **81**And He shows you His signs; which then of Allah's signs will you deny?

82 Do they not travel in the land and see what was the end of those before them? They were more numerous than these and greater in strength and in fortifications in the land, but what they earned did not avail them. **83**Then when their messengers came to them with clear arguments, they exulted in whatever knowledge they (already) had, and what they used to deride befell them. **84**So when they saw Our punishment, they said: We believe in Allah alone, and we deny what we used to set up as partners with Him. **85**But their faith could not benefit them when they saw Our punishment. Such is Allah's law, which ever takes its course in the matter of His servants; and there the disbelievers are lost.

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a **(77)** This only emphasizes that they must suffer the evil consequences of their deeds, whether the Prophet lives to see their punishment or dies before it.

b **(80)** That is, they are of use to you in carrying your burdens and yourselves from one place to another, and serve other needs.

Chapter 41

Ḥā Mīm

This chapter bears the name of its initial letters *Ḥā Mīm* and is also known as *Ḥā Mīm Sajdah*. It is also called *Fuṣṣilat,* meaning something made plain, from the occurrence of this word in v. 3. Chapters 40 to 46 form one group; see the introductory note to chapter 40. This chapter opens with an invitation to the truth, followed by a warning against its rejection and a mention of the evidence of man's own faculties against the rejection of truth. Then it shows that believers are strengthened by inspiration and that revelation gives life to those who are spiritually dead. Finally, it is stated that if warnings and arguments are not heeded, the doom is inevitable and the truth will spread gradually.

Section 1: **Invitation to the Truth**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Beneficent God! **2**A revelation from the Beneficent, the Merciful. **3**A Book of which the verses are made plain, an Arabic Quran for a people who know — **4**good news and a warning. But most of them turn away, so they do not hear. **5**And they say: Our hearts are under coverings from that to which *y*ou call us, and there is a deafness in our ears, and there is a veil between us and *y*ou,[a] so act, we too are acting.

6 Say: I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is one God, so keep in the straight path to Him, and ask His protection. And woe to those who set up partners (with Allah), **7**who do not give the due charity, and who are disbelievers in the Hereafter! **8**Those who believe and do good, for them is surely a reward never to be cut off.

Section 2: **The warning**

9 Say: Do you indeed disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two periods, and do you set up equals with Him? That is the Lord of the worlds. **10**And He made in it mountains above its surface,

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a **(5)** The coverings of the hearts, the deafness of the ears and the hanging of the veils are used simply to indicate their own determined rejection of the Truth. They resolved neither to open their hearts, in case the Truth should enter them, nor to lend their ears so that they might even hear the preaching of the Prophet.

and He placed blessings in it and ordained in it its foods, in four periods;[a] alike for (all) seekers.[b] **11**Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was a vapour, so He said to it and to the earth: Come both, willingly or unwillingly. They both said: We come willingly.[c] **12**So He ordained them seven heavens in two periods,[d] and revealed in every heaven its affair. And We adorned the lower heaven with lights, and (made it) to guard.[e] That is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing.

13 But if they turn away, then say: I warn you of a scourge like the scourge of Ād and Thamūd. **14**When messengers came to them from before them and behind them,[f] saying, Serve nothing but Allah, they said: If our Lord had pleased, He would have sent down angels. So we are disbelievers in that with which you are sent. **15**Then as to Ād, they were unjustly proud in the land, and said: Who is mightier in power than we? Do they not see that Allah Who

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***a* (10-1)** For the creation of the heavens and the earth in six periods of time, see 7:54; the word *yaum* (period) here does not mean a day of 24 hours but in fact stands for a stage in growth. The making of the earth in two periods and the making on it of the mountains, rivers and of plant and animal life in four periods is really one continuous process, of six stages in all: (1) the throwing off of the cosmic matter called the earth; (2) the cooling of its surface; (3) the making of the mountains; (4) blessing it by waters and making in it rivers; (5–6) the ordaining of foods, being, in the first place, the growth of plant life and, in the second, the growth of animal life, culminating in the creation of man. Even the earlier commentators note that the creation in six *yaum* does not refer to six days as the time actually taken in making the heavens and the earth, which is still going on.

***b* (10-2)** The meaning is that the foods which are made in the earth are equally accessible to all seekers (human beings as well as animals of all kinds).

***c* (11)** Heaven is here plainly spoken of as being originally *dukhān*, meaning *smoke*, *vapour* or *gaseous matter*. The command to creation to come willingly or unwillingly is a reference to the Divine laws working in nature. Everything created, whether in the heavens or the earth, is subject to law. The existence of one law throughout the universe is clear evidence of the existence of One God, the Maker of that law.

***d* (12-1)** As in the case of the earth, we are told that the heavenly bodies, too, were created in two stages. The creation of heavenly bodies is thus subject to the same law. For the seven heavens, see 2:29. The words, *and revealed in every heaven its affair,* show that everything created in nature serves a purpose.

***e* (12-2)** See 37:7.

***f* (14)** The coming of the prophets from before and behind signifies their impressing the truth of their message upon their people in every possible way. Some understand the coming of the prophets from near and from far.

created them is mightier in power than they? And they denied Our messages. **16**So We sent on them a furious wind in unlucky days that We might make them taste the punishment of disgrace in this world's life. And the punishment of the Hereafter is truly more disgracing, and they will not be helped. **17**And as for Thamūd, We showed them the right way, but they preferred blindness to guidance, so the scourge of a humiliating punishment overtook them for what they had earned. **18**And We delivered those who believed and kept their duty.

Section 3: **Man's evidence against himself**

19 And the day when the enemies of Allah are gathered to the Fire, they will be formed into groups. **20**Until, when they come to it, their ears and their eyes and their skins will bear witness against them as to what they did.[a] **21**And they will say to their skins: Why do you bear witness against us? They will say: Allah Who makes everything speak has made us speak, and He created you at first, and to Him you are returned. **22**And you did not cover yourselves that your ears and your eyes and your skins should not bear witness against you, but you thought that Allah did not know much of what you did. **23**And that, your (evil) thought which you entertained about your Lord, ruined you, so have you become losers.

24 Then if they are patient, the Fire is their abode. And if they ask for goodwill, they are not among those who are granted goodwill.[b] **25**And We have appointed for them comrades,[c] so they make seem good to them what is before them and what is behind them, and the word proved true against them among the nations of jinn and people that have passed away before them: they are surely losers.

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a **(20)** The bearing of witness by the ears and the eyes and the skin shows the truth of the law that the consequences of evil deeds will become manifest. (*Editor's Note:* Modern science has shown that, in this very life, parts of a person's body and samples taken from it can disclose information about, or bear witness against, the deeds that he committed.)

b **(24)** God's goodwill can be gained in this life, and for those who waste that opportunity here the only way to that goodwill is to go through the ordeal of Fire.

c **(25)** These comrades are wicked companions.

Section 4: **Believers strengthened**

26 And those who disbelieve say: Do not listen to this Quran but make noise therein, perhaps you may overcome. **27**So We shall certainly make those who disbelieve taste a severe punishment, and We shall certainly recompense them for the worst of what they did. **28**That is the reward of Allah's enemies — the Fire. They shall have in it the home to abide — a recompense for their denying Our messages. **29**And those who disbelieve will say: Our Lord, show us those who led us astray from among jinn and people that we may trample them under our feet, so that they may be among the lowest.

30 Those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them saying: Do not fear, nor grieve, and receive good news of the Garden which you were promised. **31**We are your friends in this world's life and in the Hereafter, and you have in it what your souls desire and you have in it what you ask for.[a] **32**A welcome gift from the Forgiving, the Merciful.

Section 5: **Effect of the Revelation**

33 And who is better in speech than one who calls to Allah and does good, and says: I am surely one of those who submit? **34**And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when — lo! — he between whom and *y*ou is enmity would be as if he were a warm friend.[b] **35**And none is granted it but those who are patient, and none is granted it but the owner of a mighty good fortune. **36**And if a false imputation from the devil afflict *y*ou, seek refuge in Allah.[c] Surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

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a **(31)** Verses 30 and 31 show that it is in this life that the angels descend upon the faithful, giving them the joyful news that they should not have any fear. In fact, it is here, when the faithful are persecuted and oppressed, and when the powers of evil seem to have the upper hand, that such assurances are most needed, and it is here that the angels give them comfort and strength to bear hardships, and thus they ultimately overcome the forces of evil.

b **(34)** *Editor's Note:* Verses 33–35 show that Muslims should preach Islam by means of speech and not force, by setting an example themselves of doing good deeds, and by responding to evil with good. This approach requires patience and is a great good fortune (v. 35). Thus do you win over your enemy.

c **(36)** The previous verses teach the repelling of evil with good. This verse suggests another remedy for evil. The Prophet is here told that, if his work is

37 And of His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Do not adore the sun nor the moon, but adore Allah Who created them, if He it is that you serve. **38**But if they are proud, yet those with *y*our Lord glorify Him night and day, and they do not tire. **39**And of His signs is this, that *y*ou see the earth still, but when We send down water upon it, it stirs and swells. He Who gives it life is surely the Giver of life to the dead.[a] Surely He is Powerful over all things.

40 Those who distort Our messages are not hidden from Us. Is he then who is cast into the Fire better or he who comes safe on the day of Resurrection? Do what you like, surely He is Seer of what you do. **41**Those who disbelieve in the Reminder when it comes to them, and surely it is an Invincible Book: **42**falsehood cannot come at it from before or behind it — a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One. **43**Nothing is said to *y*ou but what was said to messengers before *y*ou. Surely *y*our Lord is the Lord of forgiveness and the Lord of painful retribution.

44 And if We had made it a Quran in a foreign tongue, they would have said: Why have not its messages been made clear? What! A foreign (tongue) and an Arab![b] Say: It is to those who believe a guidance and a healing,[c] and those who do not believe,

interfered with by evildoers or if false imputations are made against him, he should seek refuge in Allah, and Divine help, which always comes to the righteous, will make truth triumphant.

a **(39)** The *still earth* signifies land dried up and without vegetation; its stirring indicates its moving with life and its swelling the producing of vegetation. This is entirely metaphorical, indicating that when Divine revelation comes it gives a new life to people. The effect of rain upon earth is likened to the effect of the Quran upon the hearts of people. *Dead* here are the spiritually dead.

b **(44-1)** There seems to be a reference here to the prophecies which spoke of the coming of an Ishmaelite or an Arab prophet. The reference to Moses in the next verse confirms this, because Moses spoke plainly of a prophet like himself appearing from among the brethren of the Israelites, who are the Ishmaelites.

c **(44-2)** The Quran is here called a healing because it was a remedy for the spiritual diseases which prevailed in the world. It is the book which found a nation affected with the worst possible spiritual and moral diseases, and within less than a quarter of a century cleansed a whole country and a whole nation of all those diseases. Its healing effect, however, has not been limited to Arabia, and today there is no people on earth that does not bear witness to the great healing power of the Quran, which is so far-reaching in its effect that non-Muslims have benefited by it equally with Muslims.

there is a deafness in their ears and it is obscure to them. These are called to from a place afar.

Section 6: **Gradual spread of Truth**

45 And indeed We gave Moses the Book, but differences arose concerning it. And if a word had not already gone forth from *y*our Lord, judgment would have been given between them. And surely they are in a disquieting doubt about it. **46**Whoever does good, it is for the good of his own soul; and whoever does evil, it is to its detriment. And *y*our Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants.

Part 25

47 To Him is referred the knowledge of the Hour. And no fruit comes forth from its coverings, nor does a female bear or give birth but with His knowledge. And on the day when He calls out to them: Where are My partners? — they will say: We declare to You, not one of us can bear witness. **48**And those whom they called upon before will fail them, and they will know that they cannot escape.

49 Man does not tire of praying for good, but, if evil touches him, he is despairing, hopeless. **50**And if We make him taste mercy from Us after distress has touched him, he says: This is due to me,[a] and I do not think that the Hour will ever come; and if I am sent back to my Lord, I shall have sure good with Him. So We shall certainly inform those who disbelieve of what they do, and We shall make them taste of hard punishment. **51**And when We show favour to man, he turns away and withdraws himself; but when evil touches him, he is full of lengthy supplications.

52 Say: Do you see, if it is from Allah, then you disbelieve in it, who is in greater error than he who is in opposition far away? **53**We will soon show them Our signs in the farthest regions and among their own people,[b] until it is quite clear to them that it is

***a* (50)** The words indicate man's ungratefulness for Divine blessings. He does not recognize Divine goodness in those gifts, but says "this is due to me", i.e., I have obtained it by my own exertion and I deserve it. And then he denies the Judgment.

***b* (53)** The word *āfāq* means *borders* or *extremeties of the earth*, or *its remote sides*, and the great message conveyed here is that Islam will spread to the most distant regions of the earth, the words *their own people* denoting the Arabs. What is stated here is that Islam will quickly spread, not only in Arabia but in the

the Truth. Is it not enough that *y*our Lord is a Witness over all things? **54**Now surely they are in doubt as to the meeting with their Lord. Now surely He encompasses all things.

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remote regions of the earth, and this prophecy is contained in a chapter revealed early at Makkah, when Muslims were being severely persecuted and the message of Islam had apparently little hope of finding acceptance anywhere. If the prophecy is so clear, its fulfilment is clearer still. Within twenty years of its birth, Islam spread through the whole of Arabia, and within a hundred years, it reached the farthest regions of the earth, both in the East and the West. Both the prophecy and its fulfilment are thus two of the most amazing facts of history.

Chapter 42

Al-Shūrā Counsel

This chapter is known as *Counsel,* from the command in v. 38 to Muslims to decide their affairs by counsel among themselves. Chapters 40 to 46 form one group; see the introductory note to chapter 40. The subjects discussed in this chapter, in sequence, are that Divine mercy is predominant over all the other attributes of God, so that His warning is an act of mercy, Divine judgment comes to settle differences, God's dealing with people is always just and no nation is destroyed unjustly, so that even the unjust are given respite, and finally that the Quran, being a revelation, guides to the right way.

Section 1: **Divine mercy in giving warning**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Beneficent God! **2**Knowing, Hearing, Powerful God![a] **3**Thus does Allah, the Mighty, the Wise, reveal to *y*ou, and (He revealed) to those before *y*ou. **4**To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; and He is the High, the Great. **5**The heavens may almost be torn apart above them, while the angels celebrate the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on earth.[b] Now surely Allah is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

6 And those who take protectors besides Him — Allah watches over them; and *y*ou are not in charge of them. **7**And thus have We revealed to *y*ou an Arabic Quran, that *y*ou may warn the mother-town and those around it,[c] and give warning of the day of Gathering,

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a **(2)** Verse 1 is the same as 40:1; see the footnote there. Verse 2 consists of three letters: *'Ain,* standing for *'Alīm* or Knowing, *Sīn* for *Samī'* or Hearing, and *Qāf* for *Qādir* or Powerful.

b **(5)** The significance is that the wickedness of man calls for immediate punishment, but the mercy of Allah withholds it. The splitting apart of the heaven is elsewhere used to signify Divine displeasure at the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus (19:90–91). The Divine displeasure at the wickedness of man is very great, but His mercy supercedes all. The angels' prayer for forgiveness for man shows that Allah Himself desires to forgive man. People's deeds do not merit forgiveness, but forgiveness is the attribute of the Divine Being, and that Divine attribute is exercised through the solicitude of the angels.

c **(7)** *Umm al-Qurā* or *the mother of the towns* is Makkah, which is so called because it was destined to be the spiritual centre of the whole world; see 6:92.

in which there is no doubt. A group will be in the Garden and (another) group in the burning Fire. [8]And if Allah had pleased, He would surely have made them a single nation, but He admits whom He pleases to His mercy. And the wrongdoers have no protector nor helper. [9]Or have they taken protectors besides Him? But Allah is the Protector, and He gives life to the dead, and He is Powerful over all things.

Section 2: **Judgment is given**

10 And in whatever you differ, its judgment is with Allah. That is Allah, my Lord; on Him I rely, and to Him I turn. [11]The Originator of the heavens and the earth, He has made for you pairs from among yourselves, and pairs of the cattle, too, multiplying you thereby. Nothing is like Him;[a] and He is the Hearing, the Seeing. [12]His are the treasures of the heavens and the earth — He amplifies provision for whom He pleases, and restricts (it also). Surely He is Knower of all things.

13 He has made plain to you the religion which He enjoined upon Noah and which We have revealed to *y*ou, and which We enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus — to establish religion and not to be divided in (regard to) it.[b] Hard it is for those who set up partners (with Allah), what *y*ou invite them to. Allah chooses for Himself whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him). [14]And they were not divided until after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves. And if a word had not gone forth from *y*our Lord for an appointed term, judgment would surely have been given between them. And those who were made to inherit the Book after them are surely in disquieting doubt about it.[c]

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a **(11)** So transcendent is the Divine Being, and so far above all material conceptions, that a likeness of Him cannot be conceived, even metaphorically. The words translated *like Him* literally mean *like a likeness of Him*. He is not only above all material limitations, but even above *the limitation of metaphor*.

b **(13)** Even so early did the Quran announce that the religion preached by the Prophet was not a new religion, but, so far as its basic principles were concerned, it was the same religion as was preached by Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus. The basic principle of Islam — entire submission to One God only — is, in fact, the basic principle of the common religion of humanity.

c **(14)** The pronoun *them* in *those who were made to inherit the Book after*

15 To this then go on inviting, and be steadfast as *y*ou are commanded, and do not follow their low desires, and say: I believe in what Allah has revealed of the Book, and I am commanded to do justice between you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds, and for you your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. Allah will gather us together, and to Him is the eventual coming.[a] **16**And those who dispute about Allah after obedience has been rendered to Him, their plea is null with their Lord, and upon them is wrath, and for them is severe punishment.[b]

17 Allah is He Who revealed the Book with truth, and (He revealed) the measure;[c] and what will make *y*ou know that perhaps

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them refers to the prophets. The people who were made to inherit the Book after the prophets, rejected the very message with which these prophets came. But they are told that their punishment is postponed till an appointed term. Such was the Divine law — *a word gone forth from your Lord* — that the struggle against Truth gathers strength at first and seems to have the upper hand for a time, but it ultimately comes to naught, thus showing that an unseen hand works in support of the Truth.

***a* (15)** The argument was so simple and sound. The Prophet told the followers of earlier revelation that he was a believer *in what Allah had revealed of the Book*, in all revelation that came before him, and the basic principles of his revelation were the same as those of the earlier revelation. The whole thing was so clear that there could not be any dispute. There is a clear ray of hope in the concluding verses — *Allah will gather us* — that they will ultimately accept the Truth. (*Editor's Note:* Muslims are here commanded to do *justice* and follow principles instead of prejudices in judging others. It is added that Allah will judge everyone, Muslim or otherwise, by their *deeds,* and not claims and labels.)

***b* (16)** The reference in *those who dispute about Allah after obedience has been rendered to Him* may be to the followers of earlier revelation, because their books required obedience to a Prophet who should appear after them. Or, the meaning may be, after people have begun to enter Islam, and Islam has been established in the land despite the severest opposition.

***c* (17)** For the meaning of *mīzān* ('measure' or 'balance') in the Quran, see 55:7 footnote. Elsewhere it is said: "Certainly We sent Our messengers with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the measure (*mīzān*), that people may conduct themselves with equity" (57:25). Thus, the purpose of revealing the *balance* or *measure* is that people may conduct themselves with equity; in other words that they may be able to carry out the ordinances contained in the Book *justly*. This is what the Prophet shows by his example. The ordinances of the Book are given in words, and the Prophet translates them into deeds, so that it is by following his example that people are led aright. The Prophet's example is thus a balance or measure which is as essential for the right guidance of people as the Book. According to some, the *mīzān* here means the *Law* by which the rights and obligations of people are weighed.

the Hour is near. **18**Those who do not believe in it would hasten it on, and those who believe are in fear from it, and they know that it is the Truth. Now surely those who dispute concerning the Hour are far astray. **19**Allah is Benignant to His servants, He gives sustenance to whom He pleases, and He is the Strong, the Mighty.

Section 3: **Allah's dealing is just**

20 Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We give him increase in his harvest; and whoever desires the harvest of this world, We give him of it, and he has no portion in the Hereafter. **21**Or do they have partners (of Allah) who have prescribed for them any religion that Allah does not sanction? And if it were not for the word of judgment (of respite), the matter would certainly have been decided between them. And surely for the wrongdoers is a painful punishment.[a] **22***Y*ou see the wrongdoers fearing on account of what they have earned, and it must befall them. And those who believe and do good are in the meadows of the Gardens — they have what they please with their Lord. That is the great grace. **23**This is what Allah gives the good news of, to His servants who believe and do good. Say: I ask of you nothing in return for it but love for relatives.[b] And whoever earns good, We give him more of good in it. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Grateful. **24**Or do they say: He has forged a lie against Allah? So, if Allah please, He would seal *y*our heart (against them). And Allah blots out the falsehood and confirms the Truth with His words.[c] Surely He is Knower of what is in the hearts.

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a **(21)** The *word of judgment* indicates a judgment already pronounced, that a respite will be given to the wrongdoers so that they may have an opportunity to reform themselves.

b **(23)** The statement that the Prophet did not ask for any reward at all is made very often in the Quran. The Arabs, closely related as they were to each other, were in a state of constant warfare. They are told to give up mutual warfare and to love one another. A similar statement is made elsewhere: "I ask of you no reward for it except that whoever wishes may take a way to his Lord" (25:57). In both cases what the Prophet wanted was not a reward for himself, but it was a good for the people themselves, being, in the second case, that they walk in the ways of God or lead godly lives and, in the first, that they love one another.

c **(24)** The sealing of the Prophet's heart signifies making it secure against the abuse of his opponents, who called him an impostor. By blotting out the falsehood and confirming the Truth, the abuses would be stopped, and thus his heart would be made secure against them. The "words" here imply the prophecies whose fulfilment would firmly establish the Truth.

25 And He it is Who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons evil deeds, and He knows what you do; **26**and He answers those who believe and do good deeds, and gives them more out of His grace. And for the disbelievers is a severe punishment. **27**And if Allah were to amplify the provision for His servants, they would rebel in the earth; but He sends (it) down by measure, as He pleases. Surely He is Aware, Seer of His servants. **28**And He it is Who sends down the rain after they have despaired, and He unfolds His mercy. And He is the Friend, the Praised One. **29**And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and all the living beings He has spread forth in both of them. And He is All-powerful to gather them together, when He will.

Section 4: **Believers should be patient**

30 And whatever misfortune befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have earned and He pardons much. **31**And you cannot escape in the earth, and besides Allah you have no protector nor helper. **32**And of His signs are the ships, like mountains on the sea. **33**If He will, He stills the wind so that they lie motionless on its back. Surely there are signs in this for every patient, grateful one, **34**or He causes them to perish for what they have earned, and He pardons much;[a] **35**and (that) those who dispute about Our messages may know. There is no refuge for them.

36 So whatever you are given is but a provision of this world's life, and what Allah has is better and more lasting for those who believe and rely on their Lord; **37**and those who shun the great sins and indecencies, and whenever they are angry they forgive; **38**and those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and whose affairs are (decided) by counsel among themselves, and who spend (on good works) out of what We have given them;[b] **39**and those

***a* (34)** The ship in these two verses is the ship of the affairs of the disbelievers, which was ultimately to be wrecked, yet Allah dealt with them mercifully by pardoning most of the wicked things they did. The next verse makes the significance clear by drawing attention to the fact that the statement is a warning to *those who dispute about the messages of Allah*, that they will find no refuge when their ship is wrecked.

***b* (38)** Muslims are here enjoined as usual to observe prayer and to spend out of what Allah has given them, yet between these two injunctions, which always go together in the Quran, is placed a third: *whose affairs are decided by*

who, when great wrong afflicts them, defend themselves. **40**And the recompense of evil is punishment like it; but whoever forgives and brings about reform, his reward is with Allah. Surely He does not love the wrongdoers.[a] **41**And whoever defends himself after his being oppressed, these it is against whom there is no way (of blame). **42**The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress people and revolt in the earth unjustly. For such there is a painful punishment. **43**And whoever is patient and forgives — that surely is an affair of great resolution.

Section 5: **Revelation guides aright**

44 And he whom Allah leaves in error has no friend after Him. And *y*ou will see the wrongdoers, when they see the punishment, saying: Is there any way of return? **45**And *y*ou will see them brought before it, humbling themselves because of disgrace, looking with a faint glance. And those who believe will say: Surely the losers are they who lose themselves and their followers on the day of Resurrection. Now surely the wrongdoers are in lasting punishment. **46**And they will have no friends to help them besides Allah. And he whom Allah leaves in error cannot find a way.

47 Respond to your Lord before the day comes from Allah which cannot be averted. You will have no refuge on that day, nor will it be yours to make a denial. **48**But if they turn away, We have not sent *y*ou as a watcher over them. *Y*our duty is only to deliver the message. And surely when We make man taste mercy from Us, he rejoices at it; and if an evil afflicts them on account of what their

counsel among themselves. At the early period when this verse was revealed, the Muslims had no important matters to decide for which they might have stood in need of counsel. The injunction is clearly meant to prepare them for transacting the momentous affairs of State and all matters connected with national weal or woe. All affairs of the Islamic state must be transacted by counsel. In this, Islam has laid the basis of Government by parliaments, and the idea found a clear practical expression in the early days of the Caliphate, when the *Khalifa* had to refer every important affair to counsel.

***a* (40)** Punishment must be proportionate to the evil committed, a very just and necessary restriction. Forgiveness here is not neglected, nor preached in such a manner as to make it impracticable. There is in Islam neither the one extreme of *an eye for an eye* nor the opposite one of *turning the other cheek.* It teaches the golden and beautiful mean that forgiveness may be exercised, if forgiveness will mend the matter and do good to the wrongdoer himself. The object to be kept in view is to *bring about reform*, whether it is attained by giving proportionate punishment or by exercising forgiveness.

hands have already done, then surely man is ungrateful. **49**Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He pleases. He grants females to whom He pleases and grants males to whom He pleases, **50**or He grants them both males and females, and He makes whom He pleases barren. Surely He is Knower, Powerful.[a]

51 And it is not granted to a mortal that Allah should speak to him, except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases.[b] Surely He is High, Wise. **52**And thus did We reveal to *y*ou an inspired Book by Our command.[c] *Y*ou did not know what the Book was, nor (what) Faith (was), but We made it a light, guiding with it whom We please of Our servants. And surely *y*ou guide to the right path — **53**the path of Allah, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Now surely to Allah do all affairs eventually come.

***a* (50)** The birth of a daughter was looked upon by the Arabs as a calamity (see 16:58–59), this being due to the low position which women held in society. The wonderful change brought about by Islam in the status of woman is clearly foreshadowed in this early revelation, where the daughter has the precedence over the son.

***b* (51)** According to this verse Allah speaks to a person in three ways: (1) by *waḥy*, meaning the inspired word which enters the hearts of the prophets and of the righteous. It is in this sense that a revelation is spoken of as being granted to the mother of Moses (28:7), and to the disciples of Jesus who were not prophets (5:111). (2) "from behind a veil" — a scene is shown as in a vision carrying a deeper significance, or words are heard by the person spoken to as from behind a veil. (3) The third form of revelation is that in which a messenger — an angel — is chosen by the Almighty to deliver His message to the person to whom He wishes to speak. This is the highest form of revelation, and such is the revelation of the Quran as granted to the Holy Prophet, being recited by the angel Gabriel. This revelation is granted only to prophets, while the other two may also be granted to the righteous who are not prophets. It should, however, be borne in mind that in all these cases the recipient of the revelation is granted certain other senses. He sees what others do not see and he hears words which others do not hear. It is, therefore, with what may be called the spiritual senses that he hears and sees and feels things which others do not hear, see, or feel.

***c* (52)** The words "and thus" refer to the last mode of granting revelation, because the Quran is spoken of as having been brought by the *Angel Gabriel* (2:97) or *the Faithful Spirit* (26:193). The word translated as "inspired Book" here is *rūḥ,* usually meaning *spirit.* Its use as meaning *inspiration*, and not the *soul*, is conclusive here. The Quran may be called the *rūḥ* or *the spirit* because it gave life to a dead world. It is dead again, and again will life be breathed into it by the Quran.

Chapter 43

Zukhruf Gold

This chapter is named *Gold* from its mention in v. 35, where it is stated that it is not gold and silver and the like but righteous deeds that are acceptable to God. Chapters 40 to 46 form one group; see the introductory note to chapter 40. The chapter opens by declaring that the revelation of the Quran has come as a favour from the Merciful God, despite people's wrongdoing. Then, after condemning polytheism, it answers the objection as to why an influential or wealthy man was not chosen as God's messenger instead of the Prophet Muhammad. It goes on to state that those who deny the revelation will, in the end, regret their deeds, and even the powerful Pharaoh was destroyed when he refused to listen to Moses. Then the objection of the idolaters is answered as to why Muslims accept Jesus when he is also taken as god by his followers. Lastly, the chapter contrasts the fate of the believers and the disbelievers.

Section 1: **Revelation is a Divine favour**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Beneficent God! **2**By the Book that makes manifest! **3**Surely We have made it an Arabic Quran that you may understand. **4**And it is in the Original of the Book with Us,[a] truly elevated, full of wisdom. **5**Shall We then turn away the Reminder from you altogether because you are a people committing excesses?[b] **6**And how many a prophet did We send among the ancients! **7**And no prophet came to them but they mocked him. **8**Then We destroyed those stronger than these in prowess, and the example of the ancients has gone before.

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a **(4)** The term *Umm al-Kitāb* literally signifies *mother* or *original of the Book,* and the opening chapter of the Quran is also known by this name, because, in its essence, it contains the whole of the Quran. But here it signifies the original source — the knowledge of God — from which the Quran comes, and the meaning is that the Quran cannot be destroyed because it exists in Divine Knowledge. The words, in fact, contain a prophecy, uttered at a time when the Prophet was alone and helpless, that the Quran will be exalted in the world, for that is its position in Divine Knowledge. The same term *Umm al-Kitāb* in 3:7 and 13:39 signifies the *basis of the book.*

b **(5)** Allah would not refrain from admonishing a people who commit excesses.

9 And if *y*ou ask them, Who created the heavens and the earth, they would say: The Mighty, the Knowing One, has created them, **10**Who made the earth a resting-place for you, and made in it ways for you that you might go aright. **11**And Who sends down water from the cloud according to a measure, then We raise to life by it a dead land; even so will you be brought forth.[a] **12**And Who created pairs of all things, and made for you ships and cattle on which you ride, **13**that you may sit firmly on their backs, then remember the favour of your Lord, when you are firmly seated on them, and say: Glory be to Him Who made this subservient to us and we were not able to do it, **14**and surely to our Lord we must return. **15**And they assign to Him some of His servants (as His offspring).[b] Man, to be sure, is clearly ungrateful.

Section 2: **Polytheism condemned**

16 Or has He taken daughters to Himself of what He creates and chosen you to have sons?[c] **17**And when one of them is given news (of the birth) of that the like of which he ascribes to the Beneficent, his face becomes black and he is full of rage. **18**Is one decked with ornaments and unable to make plain speech in disputes (a partner with God)?[d] **19**And they consider the angels, who are the servants of the Beneficent, to be females. Did they witness their creation? Their evidence will be recorded and they will be questioned.

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a **(11)** As rain descending from heaven quickens a dead earth, so Divine revelation would regenerate or raise to life people who, sunk in ignorance and superstitions, were spiritually, morally, and intellectually a dead people.

b **(15)** This refers to the Christian doctrine of assigning a son to God, and in the next verse to the idolatrous doctrine of ascribing daughters to God.

c **(16)** This subject is also dealt with in 16:57–58 and 37:149–153. In the latter place there is clear mention of their calling the angels daughters of God. Similar words occur in v. 19. The next verse shows how untrue they were to themselves, as they ascribed daughters to God but disliked daughters for themselves. It should be borne in mind that the two doctrines, taking the angels as daughters of God and worship of female divinities, were connected with each other in the Arab mind.

d **(18)** The reference in this verse is to the idols which were bedecked with ornaments. The inability of the idols to speak is adduced by Abraham as an argument against their divinity (21:63), and the same inability of the idols to answer the prayers of their devotees is advanced as an argument against the divinity of the golden calf (20:89).

20 And they say: If the Beneficent had pleased, we would not have worshipped them. They have no knowledge of this; they only lie. **21**Or have We given them a Book before it so that they hold fast to it? **22**Rather, they say: We found our fathers on a course, and surely we are guided by their footsteps. **23**And thus, We did not send before *y*ou a warner in a town, but its wealthy ones said: Surely we found our fathers following a religion, and we follow their footsteps. **24**(The warner) said: And even if I bring to you a better guide than that which you found your fathers following? They said: We surely disbelieve in what you are sent with. **25**So We exacted retribution from them, then see what was the end of the rejectors!

Section 3: **Allah's choice of a prophet**

26 And when Abraham said to his sire and his people: I am clear of what you worship, **27**except Him Who created me, for surely He will guide me. **28**And he made it a word to continue in his posterity that they might return (to it).[a] **29**But I let these and their fathers enjoy till the Truth came to them and a Messenger making manifest. **30**And when the Truth came to them they said: This is enchantment, and surely we are disbelievers in it.

31 And they say: Why was not this Quran revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?[b] **32**Do they apportion the mercy of *y*our Lord? We portion out among them their livelihood in the life of this world, and We exalt some of them above others in rank, that some of them may take others in service. And the mercy of *y*our Lord is better than what they amass.[c] **33**And if it were not that all people would become one (disbelieving) community, We would provide for those who disbelieve in the Beneficent roofs of silver for their houses and stairs (of silver) by which they ascend,

***a* (28)** This shows that the Arabs possessed enduring traditions that their great ancestor Abraham was a preacher of Unity.

***b* (31)** The two towns referred to are Makkah and Ta'if. They would not follow any but an important man of the world, a man possessing much wealth or high rank. Moral greatness possessed no value in their eyes.

***c* (32)** Human society is based on differences in rank. It is only through this difference that society can be organized and developed into a State, whether it be under modern socialism or capitalism. From these differences in the external conditions of people, the conclusion is drawn that differences must exist in the spiritual sphere too, and some people are chosen to guide others. Allah's choice for prophethood does not, however, depend on wealth, but on internal worth.

[34]and (of silver) the doors of their houses and the couches on which they recline, [35]and of gold.[a] And all this is only a provision of this world's life; and the Hereafter is, with *y*our Lord, only for the dutiful.

Section 4: **Opposition to Truth is punished**

36 And whoever turns himself away from the remembrance of the Beneficent, We appoint for him a devil, so he is his associate.[b] [37]And surely they hinder them from the (right) path, and they think that they are guided aright. [38]Until when he comes to Us, he says: If only between me and *y*ou there were the distance of the East and the West! And evil is the associate! [39]And as you did wrong, it will not benefit you at all this day that you are sharers in the punishment.

40 Can *y*ou then make the deaf to hear or guide the blind and him who is in clear error? [41]So if We take *y*ou away, still We shall exact retribution from them, [42]or We shall show *y*ou what We promise them — surely We are Powerful over them.[c] [43]So hold fast to what has been revealed to *y*ou; surely *y*ou are on the right path. [44]And surely it is a reminder for *y*ou and *y*our people, and you will be questioned. [45]And ask those of Our messengers whom We sent before *y*ou: Did We ever appoint gods to be worshipped besides the Beneficent?

Section 5: **Pharaoh's opposition to Moses**

46 And truly We sent Moses with Our messages to Pharaoh and his chiefs, so he said: I am the messenger of the Lord of the worlds. [47]But when he brought them Our signs — lo! — they laughed at them. [48]And We did not show them a sign but it was

***a* (35)** Gold and silver have no value in the sight of Allah, and He would grant these things to disbelievers to any extent they desire, if it were not that most people would be misled by these worldly temptations. The verse undoubtedly draws a picture of the modern condition of the world, where man's whole energy is devoted to the acquisition of material gains and more material gains, and people are shutting their eyes altogether to the moral values of life, with the result that the world today stands on the brink of an abyss of utter destruction.

***b* (36)** As v. 37 shows, the devil here is the evil companion who leads man to evil.

***c* (42)** V. 41 describes the general law of the punishment of the wicked; even if the Prophet dies, the wicked will meet their doom. But the general statement should not give rise to any misconception, so we are immediately told that the Prophet would see the discomfiture of his enemies with his own eyes.

greater than its fellow,[a] and We seized them with punishment that they might turn. **49**And they said: O enchanter, call on *y*our Lord for us, as He has made the covenant with *y*ou; we shall surely follow guidance.[b] **50**But when We removed from them the punishment — lo! — they broke the pledge.

51 And Pharaoh proclaimed amongst his people, saying: My people, is not the kingdom of Egypt mine and these rivers flowing beneath me? Do you not see? **52**Rather I am better than this (fellow) who is contemptible, and can hardly express himself clearly. **53**Why, then, have bracelets of gold not been bestowed on him, or angels come along with him in procession?[c] **54**So he incited his people to levity and they obeyed him. Surely they were a transgressing people. **55**Then when they displeased Us, We exacted retribution from them, so We drowned them all together. **56**And We made them a thing past and an example for later generations.

Section 6: **Jesus as prophet**

57 And when the son of Mary is mentioned as an example — lo! — *y*our people raise a clamour at it. **58**And they say: Are our gods better, or is he? They set it forth to *y*ou only by way of disputation. Indeed, they are a contentious people.[d] **59**He was only a servant on whom We bestowed favour and We made him an example for the Children of Israel;[e] **60**and if We pleased, We could

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a **(48)** Each sign was greater than the one which preceded it.

b **(49)** Every time a sign was shown, Pharaoh entreated Moses to pray for the removal of the punishment, promising that he would not in that case oppose him.

c **(53)** Pharaoh's suggestion is that if Moses were true he should have possessed much wealth like a king or he should have come with angels, as a king comes with his armies.

d **(58)** The Quran in many places condemns the doctrine of attributing children to the Almighty. But when the case of Jesus was cited, the disbelievers objected to the respect shown to him, while their own idols were condemned: "Are our gods better, or is he?" Why should not the same honour be shown to their national gods as was shown to the god of another nation?

e **(59)** This verse contains the answer to the above objection. Jesus was not honoured because the Christians took him for God or Son of God, which was in fact their own error, but because he was a righteous servant of Allah on whom

appoint among you angels to be (Our) representatives in the land. **61**And this (revelation) is surely knowledge of the Hour,[a] so have no doubt about it and follow me. This is the right path. **62**And do not let the devil hinder you; surely he is your open enemy.

63 And when Jesus came with clear arguments, he said: I have come to you indeed with wisdom, and to make clear to you some of what you differ about. So keep your duty to Allah and obey me. **64**Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him. This is the right path. **65**But factions among them differed, so woe to those who did wrong for the punishment of a painful day! **66**Do they wait only for the Hour,[b] that it should come on them all of a sudden, while they do not perceive? **67**Friends on that day will be foes to one another, except those who keep their duty.

Section 7: **The two parties**

68 O My servants, there is no fear for you this day, nor will you grieve — **69**those who believed in Our messages and submitted (to Us). **70**Enter the Garden, you and your wives,[c] being made happy. **71**Round about them are made to go golden bowls and drinking-cups, and therein is what (their) souls yearn for and the eyes delight in, and in it you will abide. **72**And this is the Garden which you are

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He had bestowed favours. He was also *an example of virtue* for the Israelites to whom he was sent as a prophet. On the other hand, the idols whom the Arabs took for gods were mere stones and could do no good to their worshippers. Moreover, the idol-worshippers represented even their great men as sunk in immorality.

***a* (61)** The *Hour* signifies here the departure of prophethood from the house of Israel. Such is the clear significance of the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21:33, Mark 12:1, and Luke 20:9, which ends thus: "Therefore I say to you, The kingdom of God will be taken from you, and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matthew 21:43). Prophethood had long remained in the house of Israel, and, as history shows, Jesus was the last prophet of the Mosaic dispensation. The Quran is here called the knowledge of the Hour in the sense that its revelation was a clear indication that prophethood was now being taken away from the house of Israel and given to another people, as Jesus himself had said. Some take the pronoun *hu* as referring to Jesus and translate these words as "he is the knowledge of the Hour", but even then the meaning would be that Jesus was sent to give people the knowledge that he was the last prophet of the Israelite dispensation.

***b* (66)** The *Hour* here signifies the doom of the Quraish.

***c* (70)** It is with their wives that the faithful are told to enter paradise.

made to inherit on account of what you did. [73]You shall have in it abundant fruit, of which to eat.

74 Surely the guilty will abide in the punishment of hell. [75]It is not abated for them and in it they will despair. [76]And We did not wrong them but they were themselves the wrongdoers. [77]And they cry: O Mālik,[a] let *y*our Lord make an end of us. He will say: You shall stay (here). [78]Certainly We bring the Truth to you, but most of you dislike the Truth. [79]Or have they settled a matter? But it is We Who settle (matters).[b] [80]Or do they think that We do not hear their secrets and their private counsels? Yes indeed, and Our messengers with them write down.

81 Say: The Beneficent has no son; so I am the foremost of those who serve (God).[c] [82]Glory be to the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne of Power, from what they describe! [83]So let them talk and sport until they meet their day which they are promised. [84]And He it is Who is God in the heavens and God in the earth. And He is the Wise, the Knowing. [85]And blessed is He Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them; and with Him is the knowledge of the Hour, and to Him you will be returned.

86 And those whom they call upon besides Him do not control intercession, but he who bears witness to the Truth and they know (him).[d] [87]And if *y*ou were to ask them who created them, they would say: Allah. How are they then turned away (from truth)!

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a **(77)** *Mālik* means literally *master*. Here it signifies the angel appointed over those in hell.

b **(79)** The disbelievers are told that they should not think that they have settled the matter of the Holy Prophet by their plans to kill him, for it is Allah Who really settles all matters.

c **(81)** This verse is commonly translated as meaning that *if* God had a son, the Prophet would be the foremost of those who serve that son. While the Arabic word *in* (occurring after "say") means *if,* it is also used to indicate *negation.* See, for instance, 10:68. The word "Beneficent" (*Raḥmān*) itself negatives the very idea on which the doctrine of sonship is based; see 19:88–93. Even if *in* is taken as meaning *if*, the verse would mean that when a man serves God he may metaphorically be called a son of God, and therefore the Holy Prophet, being the foremost of those who serve, would be a son in that sense, but he refused to be called son of God because such metaphorical words had given rise to grievous errors.

d **(86)** The bearer of witness to the Truth is no other than the Holy Prophet, and they knew well that he was the most truthful of people.

88 And his cry — O my Lord, these are a people who do not believe![a]
89 So turn away from them and say, Peace! They will soon come to know.[b]

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a **(88)** After years of hard work among them and after being subjected to every kind of persecution, the Holy Prophet still prays to Allah not to inflict punishment upon his opponents. He, however, unburdens his mind in the cry: "O my Lord, these are a people who do not believe!" An unparalleled example of heroic fortitude under trials and loving sympathy for fellow-men!

b **(89)** Turning away from them and saying "Peace!" are clear prophecies of the emigration. The early Makkan revelation contains undeniable prophecies of all the important later events in the life of the Holy Prophet.

Chapter 44

Al-Dukhān The Drought

The title of this chapter is *The Drought* from the prophecy of the drought in v. 10. Chapters 40 to 46 form one group; see the introductory note to chapter 40. It predicts lighter punishment followed by severer if the opponents of truth did not repent, and cites the case of Pharaoh. Then it contrasts the final conditions of the righteous and the wicked.

Section 1: **Lighter punishment followed by severer**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Beneficent God! **2**By the Book that makes manifest! **3**We revealed it on a blessed night — truly We are ever warning.[a] **4**In which (night) is made clear every matter of wisdom;[b] **5**a command from Us — truly We are ever sending messengers; **6**a mercy from *y*our Lord — truly He is the Hearing, the Knowing, **7**the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you would be sure. **8**There is no God but He; He gives life and causes death — your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.

9 But, in doubt, they sport. **10**So wait for the day when the heaven brings a clear drought,[c] **11**enveloping people. This is a

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***a* (3)** The revelation of the Quran on *a blessed night* has a deeper meaning beneath it than the mere fact that the revelation began on the blessed night which is elsewhere called *Lailat al-Qadr* (97:1), one of the last ten nights in the month of Ramadan. The *night* stands for a time of darkness and ignorance, when true knowledge had disappeared from the world. A prophet's advent is always preceded by such darkness, and when the Holy Prophet made his appearance, such darkness prevailed in all countries of the world. This night is called *a blessed night* because in it the world received the greatest manifestation of Divine light.

***b* (4)** Divine revelation distinguishes truth from falsehood and reveals the treasures of wisdom to people.

***c* (10)** *Dukhān* means *smoke*, *mischief*, *dearth*, *drought*, or *hunger*. The commentators agree on the basis of highly trustworthy reports that its meaning here is *drought*. The statements made in these verses are all prophetical. Drought struck Makkah after the Quraish had rejected, opposed and persecuted the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Also prophetical is the statement of v. 15, *We shall remove the punishment a little*, because the removal of the drought was followed by the "violent seizing" (v. 16) , which brought on the conquest of Makkah.

painful punishment. [12]Our Lord, remove from us the punishment — surely we are believers. [13]When will they be reminded? And a Messenger has indeed come, making clear; [14]yet they turned away from him and said: One taught (by others), a madman! [15]We shall remove the punishment a little, (but) you will surely return (to evil). [16]On the day when We seize (them) with the most violent seizing; surely We shall exact retribution.[a]

17 And certainly We tried before them Pharaoh's people and a noble messenger came to them, [18]saying: Deliver to me the servants of Allah.[b] Surely I am a faithful messenger to you. [19]And do not exalt yourselves against Allah. Surely I bring to you a clear authority. [20]And I take refuge with my Lord and your Lord, that you may not stone me to death. [21]And if you do not believe in me, leave me alone. [22]Then he called upon his Lord: These are a guilty people. [23]So go forth with My servants by night; surely you will be pursued, [24]and leave the sea behind calm.[c] Surely they are an army to be drowned. [25]How many of the gardens and springs they left behind! [26]And cornfields and noble places! [27]And goodly things in which they rejoiced! [28]Thus (it was). And We made other people inherit them. [29]So the heaven and the earth did not weep for them, nor were they given respite.[d]

Section 2: **Good and evil rewarded**

30 And We indeed delivered the Children of Israel from the humiliating punishment, [31]from Pharaoh. Surely he was high-handed, committing excesses. [32]And certainly We chose them above the nations, in having knowledge. [33]And We gave them signs in which was clear blessing.

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a **(16)** The prophecy here seems to refer to the constant defeats in battle that were to be suffered by the Quraish, beginning with the Battle of Badr, and resulting in the final overthrow of their power by the conquest of Makkah.

b **(18)** Moses wanted the Israelites to be allowed to leave Egypt.

c **(24)** There was no storm in the sea when it was left by the Israelites, so that the Egyptians, finding it calm and motionless, followed the Israelites.

d **(29)** The weeping for a dead man signifies the remembering of his good qualities or actions, which often brings tears to the eyes. *The heaven and the earth* did not weep for them because they had neither the love of God in their hearts, nor had they done anything for the good of people, so that their good qualities should have been remembered either in heaven or on earth.

34 These do indeed say: [35]There is only our first death and we shall not be raised again. [36]So bring our fathers (back), if you are truthful. [37]Are they better or the people of Tubba,[a] and those before them? We destroyed them, for surely they were guilty. [38]And We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in sport. [39]We did not create them but with truth, but most of them do not know. [40]Surely the day of Decision is the term for them all, [41]the day when friend will not avail friend in the least, nor will they be helped — [42]except those on whom Allah has mercy. Surely He is the Mighty, the Merciful.

Section 3: **Good and evil rewarded**

43 Surely the tree of Zaqqūm[b] [44]is the food of the sinful, [45]like molten brass; it seethes in (their) bellies [46]like boiling water. [47]Seize him, then drag him into the midst of hell; [48]then pour on his head torment of boiling water. [49]Taste — *y*ou are the (so-called) mighty, the honourable![c] [50]Surely this is what you doubted.

51 Those who keep their duty are indeed in a secure place — [52]in gardens and springs, [53]wearing fine silk and thick brocade, facing one another — [54]thus (shall it be). And We shall join them to pure, beautiful ones.[d] [55]They call therein for every fruit in security — [56]they do not taste death therein, except the first death; and He will save them from the punishment of hell — [57]a grace from *y*our Lord. This is the mighty achievement. [58]So We have made it easy in *y*our tongue that they may be mindful. [59]Wait then; surely they (too) are waiting.

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a **(37)** Generally *Tubba'* is taken to be the title of the kings of the Himyar in Yaman. The particular Tubba spoken of here is said to have been a prophet.

b **(43)** See 37:62 footnote.

c **(49)** Those who considered themselves mighty and honourable in the land and tried their utmost to exterminate the Truth were ultimately brought low in the land in this very life and thus tasted the consequences of their arrogance.

d **(54)** See 52:20 footnote.

Chapter 45

Al-Jāthiyah The Kneeling

The title of this chapter is taken from v. 28, which speaks of every nation ultimately *kneeling* before God. Chapters 40 to 46 form one group; see the introductory note to chapter 40. The first half of this chapter relates that there are many signs of the truth of revelation but it is still denied by the disbelievers. The second half tells us that while the coming of the judgment is denied by those whose hearts are hardened, they shall have to face their doom.

Section 1: **Denial of Revelation**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Beneficent God! **2**The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. **3**Surely in the heavens and the earth are signs for believers. **4**And in your creation, and in the animals He spreads all over, are signs for a people who are sure; **5**and (in) the alternation of the night and the day and (in) the sustenance which Allah sends down from the heaven, then gives life with it to the earth after its death, and (in) the changing of the winds, are signs for a people who understand. **6**These are the messages of Allah, which We recite to *y*ou with truth. In what announcement will they then believe after Allah and His signs?[a]

7 Woe to every sinful liar! — **8**who hears the messages of Allah recited to him then persists in arrogance, as though he had not heard them. So announce to him a painful punishment. **9**And when he comes to know of any of Our messages, he takes them for a jest. For such is a humiliating punishment. **10**In front of them is hell, and what they have earned will not avail them in the least, nor those whom they take for protectors besides Allah, and for them is a grievous punishment. **11**This is guidance; and those who disbelieve in the messages of their Lord, for them is a painful punishment of an evil (kind).

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a **(6)** *After Allah and His signs*, i.e., after the word of Allah and His signs have come to them.

Section 2: **Truth of the Revelation**

12 Allah is He Who made subservient to you the sea that the ships may glide in it by His command, and that you may seek of His grace, and that you may give thanks. **13**And He has made subservient to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, all, from Himself. Surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.

14 Tell those who believe to forgive those who do not fear the days of Allah that He may reward a people for what they earn.[a] **15**Whoever does good, it is for the good of his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is to its detriment; then to your Lord you will be brought back.

16 And certainly We gave the Children of Israel the Book and judgment and prophethood and provided them with good things, and made them excel the nations. **17**And We gave them clear arguments in the Affair.[b] So they did not differ until after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves. Surely *y*our Lord will judge between them on the day of Resurrection in that in which they differed. **18**Then We made *y*ou follow a course in the Affair, so follow it, and do not follow the low desires of those who do not know. **19**Surely they cannot avail *y*ou in the least against Allah. And surely the wrongdoers are friends of each other, and Allah is the Friend of the dutiful.

20 These are clear proofs for mankind, and a guidance and a mercy for a people who are sure. **21**Or do those who commit evil deeds think that We shall make them as those who believe and do good — their life and their death being equal? Evil is what they judge![c]

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a **(14)** By *the days of Allah* are meant the favours which are bestowed on the righteous; see 14:5. These words make it clear that there is an assurance given to the faithful in the two previous verses that they will be triumphant in this world, and rule the land as well as the sea.

b **(17)** The *Affair* or *Amr* here signifies *the prophethood of Muhammad*, regarding which the Israelites were given the clearest prophecies. In the next verse the Holy Prophet is plainly addressed as having been given this *Affair*.

c **(21)** The meaning may be that the wicked are not like the righteous, either in life or in death; or, that the wicked will not find themselves in death in a state of ease resembling what they enjoy in this life. Or, the doing of good is here called

Section 3: **Denial of Judgment**

22 And Allah created the heavens and the earth with truth, and that every soul may be rewarded for what it has earned, and they will not be wronged. **23**Have *y*ou seen him who takes his desire for his god, and Allah leaves him in error knowingly,[a] and seals his hearing and his heart and puts a covering on his sight? Who can then guide him after Allah? Will you not be mindful? **24**And they say: There is nothing but our life of the world; we die and we live and nothing destroys us but time, and they have no knowledge of that; they only conjecture. **25**And when Our clear messages are recited to them, their only argument is that they say: Bring (back) our fathers, if you are truthful. **26**Say: Allah gives you life, then makes you die, then will He gather you to the day of Resurrection, of which there is no doubt, but most people do not know.

Section 4: **The Doom**

27 And Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And on the day when the Hour comes to pass, on that day will the followers of falsehood perish. **28**And *y*ou will see every nation kneeling down. Every nation will be called to its record.[b] This day you are recompensed for what you did. **29**This is Our record that speaks against you with truth. Surely We wrote what you did.

30 Then as to those who believed and did good, their Lord will admit them to His mercy. That is the manifest achievement. **31**And as to those who disbelieved — were not My messages recited to you? But you were proud and you were a guilty people. **32**And when it was said, Surely the promise of Allah is true and the Hour — there is no doubt about it, you said: We do not know what the Hour is. We think (it) only a conjecture and we are not at all sure. **33**And the

life, and the doing of evil *death,* because good deeds give life to man and evil deeds cause his spiritual death.

a **(23)** The word *knowingly* implies that Allah knows the heart and mental attitude of the people of low desires, and the consequence of their evil deeds is that they remain in error.

b **(28)** That every nation shall have a book or a record of its deeds shows that nations are also judged according to their deeds. But nations are judged in this life, therefore the day on which every nation is called to its record is the day of its doom. The words — *you will see every nation kneeling down* — hint at a great spiritual awakening being brought about in the world.

evil of what they did will become plain to them, and that at which they mocked will beset them. [34]And it will be said: This day We forsake you as you neglected the meeting of this day of yours, and your abode is the Fire, and you have no helpers. [35]That is because you made the messages of Allah a jest and the life of this world deceived you. So on that day they shall not be taken out of it, nor shall they be granted goodwill.

36 So praise be to Allah, the Lord of the heavens and the Lord of the earth, the Lord of the worlds! [37]And to Him belongs greatness in the heavens and the earth; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

Chapter 46

Al-Aḥqāf The Sandhills

The title of this chapter is taken from the tracts of sand mentioned in v. 21 which contributed to the destruction of the tribe of Ād. Chapters 40 to 46 form one group; see the introductory note to chapter 40. This chapter deals first with the truth of revelation and the witness of truth. Then, referring to the fate of Ād, it contains a warning for those who reject the truth.

Section 1: **Truth of Revelation**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Part 26

1 Beneficent God! **2**The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. **3**We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them but with truth and for an appointed term.[a] And those who disbelieve turn away from the warning they are given. **4**Say: Have you considered what you invoke besides Allah? Show me what they have created of the earth, or have they a share in the heavens? Bring me a Book before this or any relics of knowledge, if you are truthful. **5**And who is in greater error than he who invokes besides Allah such (gods) as do not answer him till the day of Resurrection, and they are heedless of their call? **6**And when mankind is gathered together, they will be their enemies, and will deny their worshipping (them).

7 And when Our clear messages are recited to them, those who disbelieve say of the Truth when it comes to them: This is clear enchantment. **8**Or they say: He has forged it. Say: If I have forged it, you control nothing for me from Allah.[b] He knows best what you utter concerning it. He is enough as a witness between me and you. And He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.[c] **9**Say: I am not the first of

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a **(3)** The Universe had a beginning and it will also have an end.

b **(8-1)** *From Allah* here means *from the punishment of Allah*. If the Quran was a lie which the Prophet had forged, none could avert the punishment which must come upon a forger.

c **(8-2)** Whenever the punishment of the opponents is alluded to, as in the statement *He is enough as a witness between me and you*, the Divine attribute of

the messengers,[a] and I do not know what will be done with me or with you. I follow only what is revealed to me, and I am but a plain warner.[b] **10**Say: Have you considered if it is from Allah, and you disbelieve in it, and a witness from among the Children of Israel has borne witness of one like him,[c] so he believed, while you are big with pride? Surely Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

Section 2: **Witness of Truth**

11 And those who disbelieve say of those who believe: If it had been a good, they would not have attained it before us. And as they are not guided by it, they say: It is an old lie. **12**And before it was the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy. And this is a Book verifying (it) in the Arabic language,[d] that it may warn those who do wrong, and as good news for the doers of good. **13**Surely those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then continue on the right way, on them is no fear, nor shall they grieve. **14**These are the owners of the Garden, abiding in it — a reward for what they did.

15 And We have enjoined on man the doing of good to his parents. His mother bears him with trouble and she gives birth to him in pain. And the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months. Till, when he attains his maturity and reaches

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mercy and forgiveness is also mentioned to indicate that mercy always predominates in the Divine nature.

a **(9-1)** Prophets had appeared before the Holy Prophet Muhammad in every country and nation throughout the whole world, and God's sending messengers for the reformation of people was the universal experience of humanity.

b **(9-2)** The Prophet is made to deny any detailed knowledge as to the ultimate end of one or the other party, but the warning is reaffirmed in the concluding words to show that evildoers must suffer the consequences of their deeds.

c **(10)** The witness from among the Children of Israel, who bore witness of one *like him,* is Moses: "I will raise up for them a Prophet *like you* from among their brethren, … And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him" (Deut. 18:18–19). It is to the concluding statement in the above quotation that attention is called in the words, *Have you considered if it is from Allah, and you disbelieve in it*.

d **(12)** The words refer to the subject-matter of v. 10, which speaks of Moses' prophecy. The Quran is here declared as fulfilling that prophecy, and the reference to its being in the Arabic language signifies the coming of the Prophet from among the Ishmaelites, who spoke that language, and who were the brethren of the Israelites, this fact being clearly mentioned in the prophecy of Deut. 18:18.

forty years,[a] he says: My Lord, grant me that I may give thanks for Your favour, which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good which pleases You; and be good to me in respect of my offspring. Truly I turn to You, and truly I am among those who submit. **16**These are they from whom We accept the best of what they do and overlook their evil deeds — among the owners of the Garden. A promise of truth, which they were promised.

17 And he who says to his parents: Enough of you! Do you threaten me that I shall be brought forth, when generations have passed away before me? And they both call for Allah's aid: Woe to *y*ou! Believe; surely the promise of Allah is true. But he says: This is nothing but stories of the ancients. **18**These are they against whom the word proves true, among nations of jinn and people that have passed away before them. Surely they are losers.

19 And for all are degrees according to what they do, and that He may pay them for their deeds and they will not be wronged. **20**And on the day when those who disbelieve are brought before the Fire: You did away with your good things in your life of the world and you enjoyed them; so this day you are rewarded with the punishment of humiliation because you were unjustly proud in the land and because you transgressed.

Section 3: **The fate of Ād**

21 And mention the brother of Ād; when he warned his people in the sandy plains [b] — and warners indeed came before him and after him — saying: Serve none but Allah. Surely I fear for you the punishment of a grievous day. **22**They said: Have *y*ou come to us to turn us away from our gods? Then bring us that (punishment) with which *y*ou threaten us, if *y*ou are truthful. **23**He said: The knowledge is only with Allah, and I deliver to you that with which I am sent, but I see you are an ignorant people.

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a **(15)** It would appear from this that the spiritual maturity of man usually takes place at the age of forty. Evidence of this is also found in the fact that the Holy Prophet Muhammad received the Divine message for the regeneration of mankind at the age of forty.

b **(21)** The brother of a people signifies their prophet, Hūd being the prophet sent to Ād. The "sandy plains" where these people lived (*al-aḥqāf*) are located in the region of Hadramaut in Arabia.

24 So when they saw it — a cloud advancing towards their valleys, they said: This is a cloud bringing us rain. No, it is what you sought to hasten, a wind in which is painful punishment, **25**destroying everything by the command of its Lord. So at dawn nothing could be seen except their dwellings. Thus do We reward the guilty people. **26**And certainly We had given them power in matters in which We have not empowered you, and We had given them ears and eyes and hearts, but neither their ears, nor their eyes, nor their hearts availed them in the least, since they denied the messages of Allah, and what they mocked at beset them.

Section 4: **A warning**

27 And certainly We destroyed the towns round about you,[a] and We repeat the messages that they may turn (to the guidance). **28**Then why did those whom they took for gods besides Allah to draw (them) near (to Him) not help them? No, they failed them. And this was their lie and what they forged.

29 And when We turned towards *y*ou a group of the jinn, who listened to the Quran; so when they were in its presence, they said: Be silent. Then when it was finished, they turned back to their people warning (them).[b] **30**They said: Our people, we have heard a Book revealed after Moses, verifying what is (already) before it, guiding to the truth and to a right path. **31**Our people, accept the Inviter to Allah and believe in Him. He will forgive you some of your sins and protect you from a painful punishment. **32**And whoever does not accept the Inviter to Allah, he cannot escape in the earth, nor has he protectors besides Him. These are in clear error.

33 Do they not see that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth and was not tired by their creation, is Able to give life to the dead? Indeed, He is surely Powerful over all things. **34**And on the day when those who disbelieve are brought before the Fire: Is it not true? They will say: Indeed, by our Lord! He will say: Then taste the punishment, because you disbelieved. **35**So have patience

a **(27)** The cities of Ād, Thamūd and Sheba lay on the borders of Arabia; thus the people living in the metropolis are told how those living around them were destroyed previously, and they should take a lesson from their fate.

b **(29)** The jinn spoken of here seem to be the leaders of certain Jewish tribes, because they are spoken of in the next verse as believers in Moses. In fact, they are of the same class as those mentioned in 72:1.

(O Prophet), as men of resolution, the messengers, had patience, and do not seek to hasten on for them (their doom). On the day when they see what they are promised, (it will be) as if they had remained only an hour of the day. (*Y*our duty is) to deliver. Shall then any be destroyed except the transgressing people?

Chapter 47

Muhammad

This chapter is entitled *Muhammad* from the mention of the Holy Prophet's name in v. 2, foretelling that the condition of those who believe in him will be improved. The first half of the chapter says that those who prevent people from accepting the truth will be defeated in war and Makkah will be subjugated by the Muslims. The second half refers to the weak-hearted among the Muslims and how a separation will be brought about between them and the truly faithful. This chapter was revealed at Madinah in 1 A.H. when war with the Quraish had not yet begun.

Section 1: **Opponents will perish in war**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Those who disbelieve and turn (people) from Allah's way, He will destroy their works.[a] **2**And those who believe and do good, and believe in what has been revealed to Muhammad — and it is the Truth from their Lord — He will remove their evil from them and improve their condition.[b] **3**That is because those who disbelieve follow falsehood, and those who believe follow the Truth from their Lord. Thus does Allah set forth their descriptions for people.

4 So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, strike the necks; then, when you have overcome them, make (them) prisoners, and afterwards (set them free) as a favour or for ransom till the war lay down its burdens.[c] That (shall be so). And if Allah please,

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a **(1)** This chapter was revealed at a time when the enemies of Islam were at the height of their power, and had apparently uprooted Islam from Makkah, and were preparing to give it a deathblow at Madinah.

b **(2)** This is another prophecy, a counterpart of the one in v.1. The Muslims, whose condition, it is announced here, will be bettered, were in a most helpless condition at the time. The majority of them had just fled from their homes, almost penniless, to save their lives and to settle down at Madinah where, however, they were not left alone, the enemy being determined to crush them by force.

c **(4-1)** This passage mentions the only case in which prisoners of war can be taken, and thus condemns the practice of slavery, according to which people could be seized anywhere and sold into slavery. Here we are told that prisoners

He would certainly exact retribution from them, but that He may try some of you by means of others.[a] And those who are killed in the way of Allah, He will never allow their deeds to perish. **5**He will guide them and improve their condition. **6**And make them enter the Garden, which He has made known to them.[b]

7 O you who believe, if you help Allah, He will help you and make firm your feet. **8**And those who disbelieve, for them is destruction, and He will destroy their works. **9**That is because they hate what Allah reveals, so He has made their deeds fruitless. **10**Have they not travelled in the land and seen what was the end of those before them? Allah destroyed them. And for the disbelievers is (a fate) similar to it. **11**That is because Allah is the Patron of those who believe, and because the disbelievers have no patron.

Section 2: **Oppressors shall be brought low**

12 Surely Allah will make those who believe and do good enter Gardens in which rivers flow. And those who disbelieve enjoy themselves and eat as cattle eat, and the Fire is their abode. **13**And how many a town (there were), more powerful than *y*our town which has driven *y*ou out — We destroyed them, so there was no helper for them.[c] **14**Is then he who has a clear argument from his Lord like him to whom his evil conduct is made to seem good, and they follow their low desires?

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of war can only be taken after meeting an enemy in regular battle, and even in that case they must be set free, either as a favour or after taking ransom. It was the former alternative that the Holy Prophet adopted in most cases. Only in the case of the seventy prisoners taken at Badr is there mention of redemption having been taken, but this was when Islam was very weak. See also 8:67 footnote.

a **(4-2)** The meaning is that, if Allah had pleased, He could have punished the enemies of Islam otherwise than by war, but as He means to punish them by the hands of the Muslims, therefore battles must be fought.

b **(6)** The Garden of the next life is made known to the righteous in this life by making them taste of the spiritual blessings of good deeds in this very life. That a paradise is granted to the righteous in this very life is mentioned frequently in the Quran. However, triumph over those who would annihilate Truth is also spoken of as a garden in this life.

c **(13)** The opponents of Islam in Makkah were not destroyed when their final overthrow came, nor did the Holy Prophet punish them for their crimes against the Muslims. They were dealt with very mercifully — so mercifully that history does not present another instance of such merciful treatment of a conquered nation of oppressors. By their destruction was thus meant the overthrow of their power.

15 A parable of the Garden which the dutiful are promised: In it are rivers of water not altering for the worse, and rivers of milk whose taste does not change, and rivers of wine delicious to the drinkers, and rivers of honey clarified;[a] and they shall have in it all fruits and protection from their Lord. (Are these) like those who abide in the Fire and who are made to drink boiling water, so it tears their bowels apart?

16 And some of them seek to listen to *y*ou, till, when they go forth from *y*ou, they say to those who have been given knowledge: What was it that he said just now? These are they whose hearts Allah has sealed and they follow their low desires. **17** And those who follow guidance, He increases them in guidance and grants them their observance of duty.

18 Do they wait only for the Hour, that it should come upon them suddenly? Now tokens of it have already come.[b] But how, when it comes upon them, will their reminder benefit them? **19** So know that there is no god but Allah and ask protection for *y*our sin and for the believing men and the believing women.[c] And Allah knows your moving about and your staying (in a place).[d]

Section 3: **The weak-hearted ones**

20 And those who believe say: Why is not a chapter revealed?[e] But when a decisive chapter is revealed, and fighting is mentioned

***a* (15)** The description given does not mention the actual blessings of paradise, for they are blessings "which no eye has seen, nor has any ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive them" (Bukhari, 59:8, hadith 3244). The blessings mentioned here are plainly called *a parable*, an example which shows what they are like.

***b* (18)** By the *Hour* is to be understood the hour of their doom, the overthrow of their power, which is clearly spoken of in the previous verses. Tokens of it had already appeared, for they had seen how Islam was daily advancing, and how all their efforts to check its progress had ended in failure.

***c* (19-1)** Not only the Prophet but every believer is told here to keep praying to God for being protected from sins, for himself and for all the believers, men as well as women. See also 40:55, 48:2, and footnotes there.

***d* (19-2)** *Moving about* refers to people's going to and fro for the transaction of their affairs, and *staying* indicates taking rest.

***e* (20)** Muslims had been severely persecuted; they had been oppressed, slain and turned out of their homes. Hence they naturally desired to be allowed to defend themselves. By *a chapter* is meant *a revelation allowing them to fight*.

in it, *y*ou see those in whose hearts is a disease look to *y*ou with the look of one fainting at death. So woe to them! [21]Obedience and a gentle word (was proper). Then when the affair is settled, it is better for them if they remain true to Allah. [22]But if you turn away, you are sure to make mischief in the land and cut off the ties of kinship![a] [23]Those it is whom Allah has cursed, so He has made them deaf and blinded their eyes.[b]

24 Do they not reflect on the Quran? Or, are there locks on the hearts? [25]Surely those who turn back after guidance is quite clear to them, the devil entices them (to do it) and lengthens false hopes for them. [26]That is because they say to those who hate what Allah has revealed: We will obey you in some matters. And Allah knows their secrets. [27]But how will it be when the angels cause them to die, striking their faces and their backs? [28]That is because they follow that which displeases Allah and dislike His pleasure, so He makes their deeds fruitless.

Section 4: **An exhortation**

29 Or do those in whose hearts is a disease think that Allah will not bring forth their spite? [30]And if We please, We could show them to *y*ou so that *y*ou should know them by their marks. And certainly *y*ou can recognize them by the tone of (their) speech. And Allah knows your deeds. [31]And certainly We shall try you, till We know those among you who strive hard, and the steadfast, and manifest your news.

32 Surely those who disbelieve and hinder (people) from Allah's way and oppose the Messenger after guidance is quite clear to them, cannot harm Allah in any way, and He will make their deeds fruitless. [33]O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and do not make your deeds null. [34]Surely those who disbelieve and hinder (people) from Allah's way, then die disbelievers, Allah will not forgive them. [35]And do not be weak-

***a* (22)** It is the hypocrites who are addressed in these words. *Tawallai-tum* ("turn away") may mean either that *you turn your backs* on the Divine commandment to fight in defence of Truth or that *you are put in authority*.

***b* (23)** Note that Allah blinds the eyes of, and makes deaf, those who would not turn to the right way. The next verse makes it clear by saying that they do not reflect on the Quran, as if there were locks on their hearts.

hearted so as to cry for peace — and you are the uppermost — and Allah is with you, and He will not bring your deeds to nothing.

36 This world's life is only an idle sport and play, and if you believe and keep your duty He will give you your reward, and He does not ask of you your wealth. **37**If He should ask you for it and press you, you will be miserly, and He will bring forth your malice.[a] **38**Look! You are those who are called to spend in Allah's way, but some of you are miserly; and whoever is miserly, is miserly against his own soul. And Allah is Self-Sufficient and you are needy. And if you turn back He will bring in your place another people, then they will not be like you.

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a **(37)** At the end of v. 36, it is stated that God *does not ask of people their wealth*, while here they are told that *if He should ask them for it, they would be miserly*. The two statements do not contradict each other. V. 38 makes it clear that Allah, being Self-Sufficient, does not stand in need of people's wealth, so He does not ask of them their wealth for His needs. Yet great stress is laid on spending wealth, as it is for man's own good. This too is made clear in v. 38 — *whoever is miserly, is miserly against his own soul.* We are further told: *You are needy*. Man stands in need of making sacrifices for the good of his own soul and, if he does not make a sacrifice, he will suffer. There is no advancement in this world without a sacrifice, so if man has an urge for advancement, he must spend his wealth.

Chapter 48

Al-Fatḥ The Victory

This chapter is entitled *The Victory* as it deals with the conquests of Islam, from the great moral victory gained by the truce of Hudaibiyah to the prophesied triumph of Islam over all other religions. The word *victory* occurs in v. 1 and elsewhere. It is remarkable that although Muslims had been victorious in several battles before, yet it is not those but a *truce* which is called a victory, indicating that the triumph of Islam lay in its moral conquests. The chapter begins by declaring the Hudaibiyah truce to be a victory, speaking of the success of the faithful and the allegiance they rendered to the Holy Prophet, and the disappointment of the hypocrites and idolators. It then deals with the excuses of the hypocrites and separates them from the faithful. It goes on to predict more victories in battles and ends with the important prophecy that Islam will triumph over all other religions of the world. This chapter was revealed in 6 A.H.

Section 1: **Hudaibiyah truce was a victory**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Surely We have granted *y*ou a clear victory,[a] **2**that Allah may cover for *y*ou *y*our (alleged) shortcomings in the past and those to come,[b] and complete His favour to *y*ou and guide *y*ou on a right

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a **(1)** The victory referred to is that gained by the truce at Hudaibiyah in 6 A.H. The truce was a victory for the Muslims because it opened the way for the propagation of Islam, and by putting a stop to hostilities gave the opponents an occasion to ponder over the merits of the religion against which they had hitherto struggled on the field of battle. As a result of this truce large numbers came over to Islam, and the words are thus prophetical, and their truth was demonstrated long after their revelation. The conditions of the truce to which Muslims yielded were disadvantageous to them, one being that if anyone from among the people of Makkah came over to the Holy Prophet, he would return him to the Quraish, though he were a Muslim, while the Quraish were not bound to return anyone who deserted the Prophet and joined the Quraish. The Muslims felt it very hard that one of their brethren should be returned to suffer persecution, but as the Quraish refused to make a truce unless this condition was included, the Holy Prophet accepted it. Immediately afterwards Divine revelation dispelled all those misgivings, and declared the truce to be a great victory, as it actually proved to be.

b **(2-1)** The word *dhanb* means any *shortcoming*, not necessarily a *sin,* and *dhanbi-ka* here does not mean *your sin* but *the sin committed against you* or *the*

path,[a] **3**and that Allah may help *y*ou with a mighty help.[b]

4 He it is Who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they might add faith to their faith. And Allah's are the forces of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is ever Knowing, Wise — **5**that He may make the believers, men and women, enter Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them, and remove from them their evil. And that is a mighty achievement with Allah, **6**and (that) He may punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the idolaters, men and women, who entertain evil thoughts about Allah. On them is the evil turn, and Allah is furious with them and has cursed them and prepared hell for them; and evil is the destination. **7**And Allah's are the forces of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is ever Mighty, Wise.

8 Surely We have sent *y*ou as a witness and as a bearer of good news and as a warner, **9**that you (people) may believe in Allah and

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shortcoming attributed to you. The Prophet never committed a sin and the word *ghafr* here means *covering* or *protecting* against the commission of sins; see 40:55 footnote. These were the shortcomings attributed to the Prophet by his enemies, among his contemporaries and those who were yet to come after him. Despite the fact that the Prophet was respected throughout Arabia for his righteousness and truthfulness before he laid claim to prophethood, the twenty years of opposition to the Truth which he brought had poisoned the minds of the Arabs to such an extent that they now drew a very dark picture of him, heaping all kinds of abuses on him. The battles that were now being fought had, further, made it impossible for the Muslims to present a true picture of Islam to the Arabs. After several years of conflict, the Hudaibiyah truce brought about a change in the relations of the two parties and the truth about the Prophet now began to dawn on their minds. They now saw that the Prophet was not the man of terror as their leaders had pictured to them. They saw the great transformation which he had wrought and the life which he had infused into a dead nation. It was in this sense that God covered the shortcomings and failures which his opponents attributed to him. In the words *those to come*, there is a reference to the latter-day criticism of the enemies of Islam and a promise here that not only would those misunderstandings which already existed be corrected, but even those that would be spread at a later date by the enemies of Islam would also be dispelled, and Islam would thus shine in its full lustre not only in Arabia but in the whole world.

a **(2-2)** The *completion of favours* was accomplished by the spread of Islam, and the *guiding on the right path* signified the right way to success.

b **(3)** Large numbers becoming converts to Islam proved a mighty help in its cause. While proceeding to Hudaibiyah the Holy Prophet was accompanied by 1,500 men; two years later, when advancing on Makkah, 10,000 men marched under his banner, which shows how fast Islam spread after the Hudaibiyah truce.

His Messenger and may aid him and revere him. And (that) you may declare His glory, morning and evening. **10**Those who swear allegiance to *y*ou only swear allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is above their hands. So whoever breaks (his faith), he breaks it only to his soul's detriment. And whoever fulfils his covenant with Allah, He will grant him a mighty reward.[a]

Section 2: **The defaulters**

11 Those of the dwellers of the desert who lagged behind will say to *y*ou: Our property and our families kept us busy, so ask forgiveness for us. They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say: Then who can control anything at all for you from Allah, if He intends to do you harm or if He intends to do you good? Indeed, Allah is ever Aware of what you do. **12**No, you thought that the Messenger and the believers would never return to their families, and that was made pleasing in your hearts, and you thought an evil thought, and you are a people doomed to perish.[b] **13**And whoever does not believe in Allah and His Messenger — then surely We have prepared burning Fire for the disbelievers. **14**And Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases. And Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

15 Those who lagged behind will say, when you set forth to acquire gains: Allow us to follow you. They desire to change the word of Allah. Say: You shall not follow us. Thus did Allah say before. But they will say: Indeed, you are jealous of us. No, they do not understand but a little. **16**Say to those of the dwellers of the desert who lagged behind: You will soon be called against a people of mighty prowess to fight against them until they submit. Then if

a **(10)** The swearing of allegiance referred to here took place before the truce was concluded. The Holy Prophet had started with his men with the object of performing a pilgrimage, but when he reached Hudaibiyah, the Makkans opposed his entry into Makkah. Thereupon the companions of the Holy Prophet swore allegiance to him (under a tree as stated in v. 18), that they would defend him at all costs and die fighting at his side (Bukhari, 64:35, hadith 4169). The necessity for this seems to have arisen from the fact that the Quraish advanced to fight the Muslims, who were unprepared for war.

b **(12)** Even as late as 6 A.H. Muslims were so weak, as compared with their enemies, that whenever they had to go into the field, the weak-hearted thought that the Muslims were going into the very jaws of death.

you obey, Allah will grant you a good reward; but, if you turn back as you turned back before, He will punish you with a painful punishment.[a] **17**There is no blame on the blind, nor is there blame on the lame, nor is there blame on the sick. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will make him enter Gardens in which rivers flow. And whoever turns back, He will punish him with a painful punishment.

Section 3: **More victories for Islam**

18 Allah indeed was well pleased with the believers, when they swore allegiance to *y*ou under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquillity on them and rewarded them with a near victory, **19**and many gains which they will acquire.[b] And Allah is ever Mighty, Wise. **20**Allah promised you many gains which you will acquire, then He hastened this on for you, and held back the hands of people from you; and that it may be a sign for the believers and that He may guide you on a right path,[c] **21**and others which you have not yet been able to achieve — Allah has surely encompassed them. And Allah is ever Powerful over all things.[d]

22 And if those who disbelieve fight with you, they will certainly turn (their) backs, then they will find no protector nor helper. **23**(Such has been) the course of Allah that has run before, and *y*ou will not find a change in Allah's course. **24**And He it is Who held back their hands from you and your hands from them in

***a* (16)** The power of the Makkan enemy was now broken, as was proved by the advance on Makkah two years later. Hence, the defaulters are told that they would be called on to join the forces of Islam against another powerful enemy. This appears to be a reference to the wars against the Roman and Persian empires in the time of the early Caliphs, again referred to in v. 21.

***b* (19)** These *many gains* predict the later conquests of the Muslims, beginning with the conquest of Makkah which made the Muslims masters of Arabia, and then extending to other countries, both in the East and the West.

***c* (20)** By this truce *the hands of people* were *held back* from the Muslims, i.e., the Muslims were not persecuted any more. So persecution having ceased, people began to enter Islam in large numbers. This was moreover an indication that the promised conquests of Islam were not only conquests of countries but also conquests of hearts.

***d* (21)** This refers to the great Muslim conquests under the successors of the Holy Prophet. The defeat of the enemy is plainly spoken of in the next verse.

the valley of Makkah after He had given you victory over them. And Allah is ever Seer of what you do.[a]

25 It is they who disbelieved and debarred you from the Sacred Mosque — and the offering withheld from reaching its destination. And if it were not for the believing men and the believing women, whom, not knowing them, you might have trodden down so that some harm might have afflicted you on their account unknowingly — that Allah may admit to His mercy whom He pleases. If they had been apart, We would surely have punished those who disbelieved from among them with a painful punishment.[b] **26**When those who disbelieved harboured disdain in their hearts, the disdain of (the days of) Ignorance, but Allah sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and on the believers and made them keep the word of observance of duty, and they were entitled to it and worthy of it. And Allah is ever Knower of all things.

Section 4: **Ultimate triumph of Islam**

27 Allah indeed fulfilled the vision for His Messenger with truth. You shall certainly enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah please, in security, your heads shaved and hair cut short, not fearing.

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a **(24)** This is again a reference to the Hudaibiyah truce. Three times already had the disbelievers attacked Madinah with very strong forces to crush Islam, and Muslims had repulsed them every time, inflicting severe loss on them. This is referred to in the words, *after He had given you victory over them*. Yet they offered terms which were humiliating to the Muslims and the Prophet accepted them to avoid bloodshed, so deeply did he love peace. The chief terms of the agreement were: (1) That the Muslims should return without performing a pilgrimage. (2) That they should be allowed to perform a pilgrimage next year, but should not stay for more than three days. (3) That if a disbeliever, being converted, went over to the Muslims, he should be returned, but if a Muslim went over to the disbelievers he should not be given back to the Muslims (Bukhari, 54:15, hadith 2731–2732). The last term of the agreement was specially dissatisfying to the Muslims; but it shows the strong conviction which the Holy Prophet had in the truth of Islam, for he was confident that none of his companions would go over to disbelief and join the Quraish; and also that those who became converts to Islam would not desert it on account of persecution.

b **(25)** One of the reasons given here for the truce is that the welfare of the Muslims demanded it, inasmuch as there were Muslims at Makkah who were unknown even to their brethren at Madinah, and that, if a battle had taken place, they would have suffered along with the enemy. This shows how Islam was making silent progress at Makkah itself, even without the guidance of a preacher, and in spite of persecution.

But He knows what you do not know, so He has ordained a near victory before that.[a] **28**He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions. And Allah is enough for a witness.[b]

29 Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the disbelievers,[c] compassionate among themselves. *Y*ou see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking Allah's grace and pleasure. Their marks are on their faces in consequence of prostration. That is their description in the Torah — and their description in the Gospel — like a seed that puts forth its shoot, then strengthens it, so it becomes stout and stands firmly on its stem, delighting the sowers that He may enrage the disbelievers on account of them. Allah has promised such of them as believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward.

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a **(27)** The Holy Prophet's journey to Makkah to perform a pilgrimage with 1,500 of his companions was undertaken on the basis of the vision stated here. In a vision, the Prophet had seen himself and his companions performing a pilgrimage. Convinced of the truth of his vision, he set out with about 1,500 of his companions with the object of performing a pilgrimage. The Makkans, however, opposed him at Hudaibiyah, and a truce was there arranged, according to which the Holy Prophet had to return without performing a pilgrimage. The truth of the vision is therefore asserted here. It is made clear that the Prophet's return did not falsify the vision, which had to be, and was, fulfilled next year. The *near victory before that*, i.e., before the vision was fulfilled during the following year, is the conquest of Khaibar which happened in the month of Safar in 7 A.H.

b **(28)** This prophecy of the prevalence of Islam over all other religions is a prophecy which extends into the distant future, while Arabia saw its fulfilment in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. The prevalence of Islam does not, however, mean the political supremacy of its adherents at all times, nor does the prophecy signify that other religions would at any time entirely disappear. It only indicates that the superiority of the religion of Islam over all other religions will at last be established, and Islam will be the religion of the majority of the nations of the earth. See also 9:33; 61:9.

c **(29)** The word *a<u>sh</u>iddā'* used here means *firm, strong, powerful,* as well as *brave, firm of heart.* The translation *fierce, vehement,* or *harsh,* adopted in many English translations, is not correct here. The Muslims stood firm against the disbelievers but they were never fierce or hard in their treatment towards them.

Chapter 49

Al-Ḥujurāt The Apartments

This chapter takes its title from v. 4 which tells Muslims not to call out to the Holy Prophet from behind the private *apartments*. It opens by teaching good manners and good morals when large masses of people began to enter Islam. The new converts should appreciate the value of the Holy Prophet's time and have respect for not only his privacy but for each other's privacy. It goes on to teach some social virtues and the avoidance of certain vices which are the curse of a society living in ease and comfort. It also removes all ideas of superiority based on race, tribe or family and declares that with Allah what distinguishes a person is righteousness. This chapter was revealed at Madinah in 9 A.H.

Section 1: **Respect for the Prophet**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O you who believe, do not be forward in the presence of Allah and His Messenger,[a] and keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing. **2**O you who believe, do not raise your voices above the Prophet's voice, nor speak loudly to him as you speak loudly to one another, in case your deeds become fruitless, while you do not perceive.[b] **3**Surely those who lower their voices before Allah's Messenger are they whose hearts Allah has proved for dutifulness. For them is forgiveness and a great reward. **4**Those who call out to *y*ou from behind the private apartments, most of them have no sense.[c] **5**And if they had patience till *y*ou come out to them, it would be better for them. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

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a **(1)** The *presence of Allah* means the *presence of His commandments*. The words imply the utmost obedience.

b **(2)** The Quran not only inculcates high morals but also regulates social conduct, because its teachings are intended for all grades of people. When large numbers of people began to enter Islam, such directions became necessary. A loud voice is expressive of arrogance or resentment.

c **(4)** When masses of people began to enter Islam, many of them were ignorant even of the ordinary social rules, and they called out to the Prophet with loud voices while he was within his house. The practice is deprecated because it meant disrespect to the Holy Prophet.

6 O you who believe, if an unrighteous person brings you news, look carefully into it, in case you harm a people in ignorance, then be sorry for what you did.[a] **7**And know that among you is Allah's Messenger. If he were to obey you in many a matter, you would surely fall into distress; but Allah has endeared the faith to you and has made it attractive in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you disbelief and transgression and disobedience. Such are those who are rightly guided — **8**a grace from Allah and a favour. And Allah is Knowing, Wise.

9 And if two groups of the believers quarrel, make peace between them. Then if one of them does wrong to the other, fight the one which does wrong, till it returns to Allah's command. Then, if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably. Surely Allah loves the equitable.[b] **10**The believers are brethren so make peace between your brethren, and keep your duty to Allah that mercy may be shown to you.

Section 2: **Respect for Muslim brotherhood**

11 O you who believe, do not let a people laugh at (another) people, perhaps they may be better than they; nor let women (laugh) at women, perhaps they may be better than they. Neither find fault with one another, nor call one another by (offensive) nick-names. Evil is a bad name after faith; and whoever does not repent, these it is that are the wrongdoers.[c] **12**O you who believe, avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is sin; and do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You abhor it! And keep your duty to Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful.

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a **(6)** Such a direction was expedient when a condition of war necessitated prompt action to be taken against the enemy. But even the exigencies of war were to be carried out with the utmost carefulness, so that friendly people should not suffer loss.

b **(9)** This verse requires Muslims not to be indifferent when one group of them quarrels with another. They must bring every kind of pressure to bear upon the party in error. It is the duty of every Muslim to maintain the unity of Islam. An attitude of indifference towards *fatwas* of *kufr* (heresy), directed against their own brethren by ignorant *Mullas* (clerics), has dealt a fatal blow to the union of Muslim brotherhood, and, if Muslims do not raise their voice against these *fatwas*, they must never hope to make any progress towards real union.

c **(11)** This verse and those that follow deal with some of the evils which are most rampant in civilized society, and which corrupt a society to its core.

13 O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you. Surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.[a]

14 The dwellers of the desert say: "We believe". Say: You do not believe, but say, "We submit"; and faith has not yet entered into your hearts. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not diminish anything of your deeds. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[b] **15**The believers are those only who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then they do not doubt, and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah. Such are the truthful ones.

16 Say: Would you apprise Allah of your religion, and Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth? And Allah is Knower of all things. **17**They presume to lay *y*ou under an obligation by becoming Muslims. Say: Do not lay me under an obligation by your Islam; rather, Allah lays you under an obligation by guiding you to the faith, if you are truthful. **18**Surely Allah knows the unseen of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Seer of what you do.

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a **(13)** The principle of the brotherhood of mankind laid down here is on the broadest basis. The address here is not to believers, as in the two previous verses, but to mankind in general, who are told that they are all, as it were, members of one family, and their divisions into nations, tribes and families should not lead to estrangement from, but to a better knowledge of, each other. Superiority of one over another in this vast brotherhood does not depend on nationality, wealth, or rank, but on the careful observance of duty, or moral greatness.

b **(14)** Here Muslims are enjoined to deal kindly and leniently, even with those who, being novices, were not yet really grounded in the faith, though they were members of the Muslim brotherhood. Faith had not yet entered into their hearts, but they were to be regarded as Muslims. The solidarity of Islam is being shattered today by narrow-minded *Mullas* (clerics) who, on one pretext or another, issue *fatwas* of *kufr* against this or that party of Muslims.

Chapter 50

Qāf

This chapter takes its name from its initial letter *Qāf,* referring to the great power of God, and deals with the Resurrection, both the spiritual resurrection of this life and the greater Resurrection of the life after death. It begins by drawing attention to the testimony of nature and then to the fate of some former peoples. Then it shows that every action has a consequence and these consequences are made manifest on the day of Judgment. Finally, it states that the good and the bad must receive their due, and refers to the two resurrections. From the 50th to the 56th chapter, there is a group of seven chapters all belonging to the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **The Resurrection — Signs in Nature**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Almighty (God)![a] By the glorious Quran![b] **2**Yet they wonder that a warner has come to them from among themselves; so the disbelievers say: This is a wonderful thing! **3**When we die and become dust — that is a far return. **4**We know indeed what the earth diminishes of them and with Us is a book that preserves.[c] **5**But they reject the Truth when it comes to them, so they are in a state of confusion.

6 Do they not look at the sky above them — how We have made it and adorned it and it has no flaws? **7**And the earth, We have spread it out, and cast in it mountains, and We have made to grow in it (things) of every beautiful kind — **8**as an insight and a reminder to every servant who turns (to Allah). **9**And We send down from the clouds water abounding in good, then We cause to grow with it

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a **(1-1)** The letter *Qāf,* with which v.1 begins, stands for the name *Qādir* (or *Qadīr*) of the Divine Being, meaning *Omnipotent* or *All-Powerful*, or for *al-Qiyāmat*, the *Resurrection*.

b **(1-2)** An expression of wonder at the disbelief of people. The whole of the Quran is spoken of as one book even at this early period.

c **(4)** *What the earth diminishes* is the body, dust going to dust. *The book that preserves* is the record of the deeds which a person has done. The consequences of deeds are preserved in their entirety and out of them grows a new life in the Resurrection.

gardens and the grain that is reaped, [10]and the tall palm-trees having flower spikes piled one above another — [11]a sustenance for the servants — and We give life with it to a dead land. Thus is the rising.[a]

12 Before them the people of Noah rejected (the Truth) and (so did) the dwellers of Rass and Thamūd [13]and Ād and Pharaoh and Lot's brethren, [14]and the dwellers of the Grove and the people of Tubba.[b] They all rejected the messengers, so My threat came to pass. [15]Were We then fatigued with the first creation? Yet they are in doubt about a new creation.[c]

Section 2: **The Resurrection — Consequences made manifest**

16 And certainly We created man, and We know what his mind suggests to him — and We are nearer to him than his life-vein. [17]When the two receivers receive, sitting on the right and on the left, [18]he does not utter a word but there is by him a watcher at hand.[d] [19]And the stupor of death comes in truth; that is what *y*ou would try to avoid. [20]And the trumpet is blown. That is the day of threatening. [21]And every soul comes, with it a driver and a witness.[e] [22]*Y*ou were indeed heedless of this, but now We have removed from *y*ou *y*our veil, so *y*our sight is sharp this day.[f]

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a **(11)** The *rising* here includes both the spiritual resurrection of a dead people in this life and also the greater Resurrection in a life after death.

b **(14)** For the dwellers of Rass, see 25:38 footnote; for dwellers of the Grove, 15:78 footnote; for Tubba, 44:37 footnote.

c **(15)** The meaning is that Allah did not lack power in dealing with the former generations so that they should doubt His power in dealing with a new one. Or, the first creation is the physical creation of man, and the second creation his spiritual regeneration.

d **(18)** The three verses 16–18 impress upon man that all his deeds and words bear fruit, that nothing is said or done in vain.

e **(21)** The *driver* signifies the *impeller to evil*, and the *witness* the *caller to the truth*.

f **(22)** This verse shows clearly that the consequences of evil actions which remain hidden from the human eye in this life are made manifest after death. This is the significance of the sight being made sharp, so that man will then see what he is unable to see here. Such is hell, according to the teachings of the Quran, namely, the hidden consequences of evil deeds, when made manifest to a person, become his hell.

23 And his companion will say: This is what is ready with me.[a] **24**Cast into hell every ungrateful, rebellious one, **25**forbidder of good, exceeder of limits, doubter, **26**who sets up another god with Allah, so cast him into severe punishment. **27**His companion will say: Our Lord, I did not cause him to rebel but he himself went far in error. **28**He will say: Do not dispute in My presence, and indeed I gave you warning beforehand. **29**My sentence cannot be changed, nor am I in the least unjust to the servants.

Section 3: **The Resurrection**

30 On the day when We say to hell: Are *y*ou filled up? And it will say: Are there any more?[b] **31**And the Garden is brought near for those who guard against evil — (it is) not distant.[c] **32**This is what you are promised — for everyone turning (to Allah), keeping (the limits) — **33**who fears the Beneficent in secret, and comes with a penitent heart: **34**Enter it in peace. That is the day of abiding. **35**They shall have in it all they wish, and with Us is yet more.[d]

36 And how many a generation We destroyed before them who were mightier in prowess than they, so they went about in the lands! Is there a place of refuge? **37**Surely there is a reminder in this for him who has a heart or he listens and is a witness.

38 And certainly We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six periods, and no fatigue touched Us.[e]

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a **(23)** The *evil companion* or the *devil* is meant, at whose suggestion a person commits evil deeds. *What is ready* is the record of man's evil deeds, which will be palpably manifest to him on the day of Resurrection.

b **(30)** This is metaphorical. One people after another continue to do evil without taking a lesson from the fate of previous people. It is also an expression of man's desire to have more and more of wealth and material comfort.

c **(31)** If a person used his inner sight, he could see that the keeping away from evil and the doing of good brought him nearer and nearer to true happiness, for which the Garden stands here, in this very life.

d **(35)** This is to show that the doing of good gives man all that he desires. But as his desires are limited, he is told that God will give him more than he desires. This is explained by some as meaning the sight of the Divine Being, which is the highest blessing of the next life.

e **(38)** The Bible says: "And He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made" (Genesis, 2:2). The Quran negatives any such idea in

39So bear patiently what they say, and celebrate the praise of *y*our Lord before the rising of the sun and before the setting. **40**And glorify Him in the night and after prostration.[a]

41 And listen on the day when the crier cries from a near place — **42**the day when they hear the cry in truth. That is the day of coming forth.[b] **43**Surely We give life and cause to die, and to Us is the eventual coming — **44**the day when the earth splits apart from (under) them, they hastening forth. That is a gathering easy to Us. **45**We know best what they say, and *y*ou are not one to compel them. So remind by means of the Quran him who fears My threat.[c]

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relation to God, Who does not stand in need of rest: *No fatigue touched Us.* For the creation of the heavens and the earth in six periods or six days, see 7:54.

a **(40)** *Prostration* here stands for prayer. The significance is that one should not get tired of glorifying God; prayer is in its entirety a glorification of God, but even after prayer, one should continue the glorification of God.

b **(42)** The *crier* (v. 41) is the Prophet; see 3:193: "Our Lord, surely we have heard a Crier calling to the faith, saying: Believe in your Lord." This cry was a distant cry at first, but, as we are told in v. 41, it will be a cry from a near place in the end, so that people will listen to it in truth. Note that the spiritual resurrection to be brought about in this life by the Prophet is spoken of in the whole of this chapter, along with the greater Resurrection of the next life.

c **(45)** The words, *you are not one to compel them*, refer plainly to the spiritual resurrection, which the Prophet desired to see immediately; he is told that he will see the dead coming to life but he could not compel people to accept the truth. The splitting apart of the earth in v. 44 and their hastening forth to life spiritual and their gathering in Islam were all witnessed in the lifetime of the Prophet, and may be witnessed again in the near future. This spiritual resurrection is treated as an evidence of the greater Resurrection, and that is the reason why both resurrections are spoken of in the same words.

Chapter 51

Al-Dhāriyāt The Scatterers

The title of this chapter is taken from the mention of *The Scatterers* of Truth in the first verse. It opens by drawing attention to the gradual advancement of the Truth and the certainty of the judgment of the rejectors. Then it speaks of the news given to Abraham of the birth of a son, standing for the birth of a nation of the righteous, and goes on to relate the fate of some previous nations. It ends by warning the opponents that their good fortune is about to be ended and they shall be judged. This chapter belongs to the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Falsehood is doomed**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By those scattering far and wide! **2**And those bearing the load! **3**And those running easily! **4**And those distributing the Affair! — **5**What you are promised is surely true, **6**and the Judgment will surely come to pass.[a]

7 By the heaven full of paths![b] **8**Surely you are of varying opinion — **9**he is turned away from it who would (himself) be turned away.[c] **10**Cursed be the liars, **11**who are in an abyss, neglectful; **12**they ask: When is the day of Judgment? **13**(It is) the day when

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a **(6)** In verses 1–4, attention is called to certain facts by means of an oath, for which see 37:1, while verses 5–6 indicate the conclusion to which those facts lead. V. 1 refers to the winds that raise up dust before the coming of a cloud; v. 2 to the clouds that carry rain; v. 3 to the winds that carry the clouds along, and v. 4 to the winds that distribute the rain. This indicates a similar arrangement in the spiritual world by which Truth gradually advances. Attention is drawn here to the scattering of Truth broadcast through the Holy Prophet and his faithful followers, which led to some bearing the load of it as if they had become pregnant with Truth, while others ran easily towards its acceptance. But they were not satisfied with mere acceptance; they went to and fro to deliver to others the Truth and the Light which they had received. In the existence of these workers in the cause of Truth there was a clear sign that the triumph of Islam would soon take place.

b **(7)** The description of heaven as *full of paths* is a scientific truth certainly unknown to the world at the time of the revelation of the Quran.

c **(9)** Only those are turned away from the Truth who *themselves* turn away.

they are tried at the Fire. [14]Taste your persecution! This is what you would hasten on.[a]

15 Surely the dutiful are amidst Gardens and fountains, [16]taking what their Lord gives them. Surely they were before that the doers of good. [17]They used to sleep but little at night. [18]And in the morning they asked (Divine) protection. [19]And in their wealth there was a due share for the beggar and for one who is deprived (of good).[b]

20 And in the earth are signs for those who are sure, [21]and in yourselves — do you not see? [22]And in the heavens is your sustenance and what you are promised.[c] [23]So by the Lord of the heavens and the earth! It is surely the truth, just as you speak.[d]

Section 2: **The fate of previous nations**

24 Has the story of Abraham's honoured guests reached *y*ou? [e] [25]When they came to him, they said: 'Peace!' 'Peace!' said he. Strangers! [26]Then he turned aside to his family and brought a fat calf. [27]So he placed it before them. He said: Will you not eat? [28]So he conceived a fear of them. They said: Do not fear. And they gave him the good news of a boy possessing knowledge. [29]Then his wife came up in grief, and she struck her face and said: A barren old woman! [30]They said: So says *y*our Lord. Surely He is the Wise, the Knowing.

31 He said: What is your errand, messengers? [32]They said: We have been sent to a guilty people [33]that we may send upon them

Part 27

***a* (14)** Tasting of persecution signifies receiving punishment for *their persecution of the Muslims*.

***b* (19)** The word *maḥrūm,* "deprived", is understood by some to mean *a poor man who does not beg*, and by others, *one who has not the faculty of speech*, like the dog and the cat. Note that the poor are here spoken of as having a *share* in the wealth of the rich. The State is bound to take that share and make it over to the poor. But it is only a share, not the whole.

***c* (22)** *What is promised* may mean the spiritual sustenance as contrasted with physical sustenance. Or, it may refer to the Judgment, of which they were warned again and again.

***d* (23)** Note the high degree of certainty, the unshakable faith in the ultimate triumph of the Truth at this early period. Just as people's speaking to each other is a reality, even so is God's speaking to man.

***e* (24)** See 11:69 footnote.

stones of clay, [34]marked from *y*our Lord for those who commit excesses.[a] [35]Then We brought forth such believers as were there. [36]And We found there only one house of Muslims.[b] [37]And We left there a sign for those who fear the painful punishment.

38 And in Moses (was another sign), when We sent him to Pharaoh with clear authority. [39]But he turned away on account of his might and said: An enchanter or a madman! [40]So We seized him and his armies and hurled them into the sea, and he was blameable. [41]And in Ād, when We sent upon them the destructive wind. [42]It spared nothing that it came against, but it made it like ashes. [43]And in Thamūd, when it was said to them: Enjoy yourselves for a while. [44]But they revolted against the commandment of their Lord, so the punishment overtook them, while they saw.[c] [45]So they were unable to rise up, nor could they defend themselves; [46]and the people of Noah before. Surely they were a transgressing people.

Section 3: **Judgment is sure**

47 And the heaven, We raised it high with power, and We have made the vast extent. [48]And the earth, We have spread it out. How well We prepared it! [49]And of everything We have created pairs that you may be mindful.

50 So flee to Allah. Surely I am a plain warner to you from Him. [51]And do not set up with Allah another god. Surely I am a plain warner to you from Him. [52]Thus, no messenger came to those before them but they said: An enchanter or a madman! [53]Have they charged each other with this? Indeed, they are an inordinate people. [54]So turn away from them, for *y*ou are not to blame;[d] [55]and remind, for reminding benefits the believers.

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a **(34)** For the punishment sent on Lot's people, see 7:84 footnote. The stones were marked, i.e., they were destined for them.

b **(36)** It is said to be the house of Lot himself. A Muslim is one who submits himself to God, and in this sense all prophets and their righteous followers were Muslims.

c **(44)** See 7:78.

d **(54)** *Turning away from them* means to pay no heed to their abuses and to disregard their reviling. The words that follow make this clear, for the Prophet is enjoined to continue to remind, for there will be some who will believe, and these will profit by the reminder.

56 And I have not created the jinn and the people except that they should serve Me. **57**I desire no sustenance from them, nor do I desire that they should feed Me. **58**Surely Allah is the Provider of sustenance, the Lord of Power, the Strong. **59**Surely the lot of the wrongdoers is as was the lot of their companions, so let them not ask Me to hasten (it) on. **60**Woe, then, to those who disbelieve because of that day of theirs which they are promised!

Chapter 52

Al-Ṭūr The Mountain

The name of this chapter is taken from the first verse where the mention of *The Mountain* is an indication of a similarity between the Holy Prophet Muhammad and Moses. The chapter tells us that while punishment must befall the Holy Prophet's opponents as it did the opponents of Moses, the faithful will be rewarded with success. It ends with a clear mention of the doom of the opponents in this very life. This chapter belongs to the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Success of the faithful**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By the Mountain! **2**And a Book written **3**on unfolded vellum! **4**And the frequented House, **5**and the elevated canopy, **6**and the swollen sea! **7**The punishment of *y*our Lord will surely come [a] — **8**there is none to avert it; **9**on the day when the heaven will be in a state of commotion, **10**and the mountains will pass away, fleeing.[b]

11 Woe on that day to the deniers, **12**who amuse themselves by idle talk. **13**The day when they are driven to hell-fire with violence.

***a* (7)** Verses 1–6 draw attention to parallels in the revelations of Moses and the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The mount in the one case is Mt. Sinai, and in the other the mount Hira; the Book stands for the Torah in the one case and the Quran in the other; the House that is frequented and the elevated canopy refer, on the one hand, to the tabernacle raised by Moses for the Israelites as a sacred place, where they worshipped God and offered sacrifices, and on the other to the Sacred House at Makkah, which was to be the centre of the Muslims of all nations, all countries, and all ages, and where they were to offer sacrifices. The swollen sea represents the sea which brought destruction to Pharaoh and his armies, while the Holy Prophet's enemies are told in the next verse that the punishment of their Lord would as surely overtake them on land as it overtook the enemies of Moses in the swollen sea. The whole passage draws attention to the close similarity of the revelations of Moses and the Holy Prophet, and warns the disbelievers that their power will be brought to naught, as it was in the case of Pharaoh.

***b* (10)** The great transformation that was to be brought about by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the sweeping away of the old order of superstition, ignorance and vice, and its replacement by light, learning and righteousness, the overthrow of a wicked generation and the ushering in of a new era, is here represented as the *commotion of the heaven* and the *passing away of the mountains*; see 20:105.

[14]This is the Fire, which you used to deny. [15]Is it magic or do you not see? [16]Burn in it; then bear (it) patiently, or do not bear (it), it is the same to you. You are recompensed only for what you did.

17 The dutiful will be surely in Gardens and bliss, [18]rejoicing because of what their Lord has given them; and their Lord saved them from the punishment of the burning Fire. [19]Eat and drink with pleasure for what you did, [20]reclining on thrones set in lines, and We shall join them to pure, beautiful ones.[a] [21]And those who believe and whose offspring follow them in faith — We unite with them their offspring and We shall not deprive them of any of their work. Every man is pledged for what he does.[b] [22]And We shall aid them with fruit and flesh, as they desire. [23]They pass therein from one to another a cup, in which there is neither idle talk, nor sin.[c] [24]And round them go boys of theirs as if they were hidden pearls.[d]

***a* (20)** Two points here must be borne in mind. Firstly, paradise is a place for faithful women as well as for faithful men, and hence the Quran often speaks of the faithful as being in paradise with their wives; see 13:23, 36:56, 40:8 and 43:70. Secondly, the blessings of paradise are alike for women and men, there being not the least difference in this respect between the two sexes; see 4:124, 9:72 and 57:12. As to what is meant by "pure, beautiful ones" (in Arabic *ḥūr* and *ʿīn*), wherever blessings of paradise are spoken of, these are nothing but physical manifestations of the spiritual blessings which the doers of good enjoy in this life too. The gardens, trees, rivers, milk, honey, fruits and numerous other blessings spoken of as being met with in paradise are not things of this life. See further 32:17 footnote. Thus the "pure, beautiful ones" are not actually the beautiful women of this life but these are heavenly blessings which the righteous women shall have along with the righteous men, for v. 17 plainly says that those who keep their duty will find these blessings.

These blessings are described in words which apply to women because the reward spoken of here is one having special reference to the *purity of character* and the *beautiful deeds* of the righteous, and it is *womanhood* which stands for a symbol of *purity* and *beauty*. Moreover, note that in Arabic *ṣāliḥāt* and *ṭayyibāt* signify *good deeds* and *pure things* as well as *good women* and *pure women*.

***b* (21)** Those who have done great deeds of sacrifice are united with their offspring because even their children follow their footsteps and do the deeds their fathers did, reaping the benefit of those deeds. Note the clear doctrine of man's responsibility for his actions: "Every man is pledged for what he does."

***c* (23)** This cup is therefore entirely of a different nature from what is known in this life.

***d* (24)** These boys may either be the offspring of the faithful mentioned in v. 21, or heavenly blessings of the nature discussed in v. 20 footnote.

[25]And they will advance to each other, questioning — [26]saying: Surely we feared before on account of our families.[a] [27]But Allah has been gracious to us and He has saved us from the punishment of the hot wind. [28]Surely we called upon Him before. Surely He is the Benign, the Merciful.

Section 2: **Opponents are doomed**

29 So remind for, by the grace of *y*our Lord, *y*ou are no soothsayer, nor madman. [30]Or say they: A poet — we wait for him the evil accidents of time. [31]Say: Wait, I too am waiting along with you. [32]Or do their understandings tell them this? Or are they an inordinate people? [33]Or say they: He has forged it. Indeed, they have no faith. [34]Then let them bring a saying like it, if they are truthful.[b] [35]Or were they created without a (creative) agency?[c] Or are they the creators? [36]Or did they create the heavens and the earth? No, they are sure of nothing. [37]Or do they possess the treasures of *y*our Lord with them? Or do they have absolute authority?[d] [38]Or do they have the means by which they listen? Then let their listener bring a clear authority.[e] [39]Or does He have daughters and you have sons? [40]Or do *y*ou ask of them a reward so that they are over-burdened by a debt? [41]Or do they possess the unseen, so they write (it) down?[f] [42]Or do they intend a plot? But

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a **(26)** This clearly shows that righteous women will be in paradise along with righteous men. The difference of sex counts for nothing in the sight of Allah.

b **(34)** So early did the Quran challenge its opponents to produce the like of it. See 2:23 footnote, as to the uniqueness of the Holy Quran.

c **(35)** Or without a cause, or without a purpose.

d **(37)** Their authority or power in the land would soon be brought to naught.

e **(38)** The Arab astrologers and diviners pretended that they could listen to the secrets of the future, but their conjectures about the future failed to make any impression, as they did not turn out true. See also 15:17, 37:8, 67:5 and 72:8. From what is said further on in v. 41, and elsewhere, challenging them to put down their pretended knowledge of the unseen in writing, a challenge repeatedly given but never accepted, it is clear that the diviners themselves knew that what they said was no more than mere conjecture.

f **(41)** Here we have a clear proof that from the very beginning the Quran was written down as it was revealed. This chapter is one of the very early

those who disbelieve will be the trapped ones in the plot.[a] **43**Or do they have a god other than Allah? Glory be to Allah from what they set up as partners (with Him)!

44 And if they were to see a portion of the heaven coming down,[b] they would say: Piled-up clouds! **45**Leave them then till they meet that day of theirs in which they are struck with punishment, **46**the day when their struggle will not avail them at all, nor will they be helped.[c] **47**And surely for those who do wrong there is a punishment besides that, but most of them do not know.[d] **48**And wait patiently for the judgment of *y*our Lord, for surely *y*ou are before Our eyes, [e] and celebrate the praise of *y*our Lord, when *y*ou rise, **49**and in the night, glorify Him too, and at the setting of the stars.

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revelations, and here we find the opponents challenged to write down prophecies relating to the future, the suggestion clearly being that the prophecies of the Quran relating to the future were handed over to them in a written form.

a **(42)** Mark the clear language in which their vanquishment and the overthrow of their power is spoken of.

b **(44)** By a *portion of the heaven coming down upon them* is meant a punishment from heaven, which they repeatedly demanded. See 17:92 and 26:187.

c **(46)** Mark the clearness and force with which the prophecy is continued. The reference to war and their vanquishment in it is made clearer here.

d **(47)** The two kinds of punishment with which the opponents were threatened are spoken of distinctly in this verse, namely, a punishment which was to overtake them in this very life in the form of famines and the wars which were to result in the complete overthrow of their power, and a punishment in the form of spiritual torment in another life.

e **(48)** The judgment of the Lord signifies the punishment of the wicked. The Prophet is not to have any fear, for he is spoken of as being *before Our eyes*.

Chapter 53

Al-Najm The Star

The word *Star,* which gives its name to this chapter, occurs in the first verse. It states that the Holy Prophet Muhammad will rise to the highest eminence to which man can rise. Then it declares that nothing can avail against the Truth and refers to the power of God as manifested in the destruction of falsehood. The date of its revelation is the fifth year of the Holy Prophet's mission at Makkah.

Section 1: **Eminence to be attained by the Prophet**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By the star when it sets! [a] **2**Your companion is not in error, nor does he deviate.[b] **3**Nor does he speak out of desire. **4**It is nothing but revelation that is revealed [c] — **5**One Mighty in power has taught him,[d] **6**the Lord of strength. So he attained to perfection,[e]

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a **(1)** The best-known significance of *najm* is *star*, and when used as a proper noun it signifies *the Pleiades*. In the setting of the star the opponents are warned of the calamities which would soon overtake them; their star of fortune was about to set. A less-known significance is that the meaning of the word *najm* is *a portion of the Quran,* and the word *hawā* ("sets") means its revelation. The meaning in this case is that every portion of the Quran when it is revealed is an evidence that the Prophet is not in error — he is in the right.

b **(2)** By *your companion* is meant *the Prophet*, who had led among this very people a life of unblemished purity. There are two statements made here; being in error on his part is denied in the first to show that he had a true knowledge or he did not err in theory, and *deviation* from the right course is denied in the second to show that he acted according to that knowledge, or his practice accorded with the theory. This verse is a conclusive proof that according to the Holy Quran the Prophet was perfectly sinless.

c **(4)** The pronoun "it" here refers to the *najm* or portion of the Quran spoken of in v. 1. The Quran was not his word, for he spoke not out of his own desire; it was the word of God.

d **(5)** The One Who taught him was God Himself as plainly stated elsewhere: "The Beneficent — He taught the Quran" (55:1–2).

e **(6)** The Holy Prophet is spoken of here as having attained to perfection because the Almighty Himself was his Teacher.

[7]and he is in the highest part of the horizon.[a] [8]Then he drew near, drew nearer yet,[b] [9]so he was the measure of two bows or closer still.[c] [10]So He revealed to His servant what He revealed.[d] [11]The heart was not untrue in seeing what he saw. [12]Do you then dispute with him as to what he saw? [13]And certainly he saw Him in another descent, [14]at the farthest lote-tree.[e] [15]Near it is the Garden of Abode. [16]When that which covers covered the lote-tree, [17]the eye did not turn aside, nor did it exceed the limit. [18]Certainly he saw some of the greatest signs of his Lord.

[19] Have you then considered Lāt and Uzzā, [20]and another, the third, Manāt? [21]Are the males for you and for Him the females?[f] [22]This indeed is an unjust division! [23]They are nothing but names which you have named, you and your fathers — Allah has sent no authority for them. They follow only conjecture and what (their) souls desire. And certainly the guidance has come to them from

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a **(7)** The Prophet's being in the highest part of the horizon is in reference to the resplendence of his light, which was to illuminate all corners of the world — a prophecy that he will shine out in the full brilliance of his light as the midday sun.

b **(8)** The verse points out that the Prophet attained the utmost nearness to God which it is possible for man to attain.

c **(9)** The expression "measure of two bows" indicates close union. The two bows seem to indicate the Holy Prophet's twofold perfection, i.e., his nearness to the Divine Being and his humility in his relations with people.

d **(10)** The word *mā* ("what") in "what He revealed", according to all commentators, indicates that a mighty revelation was given to him.

e **(14)** This indicates a place beyond which human knowledge does not go. The significance conveyed by the words is that the Prophet's knowledge of things Divine was the utmost which could be vouchsafed to man.

f **(21)** Verses 19–21 are made the basis of a false story that the devil interfered in the revelation at this point, so that instead of v. 21 the Holy Prophet read the words: "These are exalted females whose intercession is to be sought". But the insertion of these few words in a chapter which is wholly directed against idolatry is quite out of place: v. 23 condemns idols; v. 26 denies their intercession; v. 28 condemns the giving of names of female deities to angels, and so on. It is further asserted that 22:52 was immediately revealed to explain that Allah nullified the devil's interference, but there is a period of at least eight years between the revelation of this verse and that of 22:52. Moreover, if the Prophet had made any such compromise, it could not have been a sudden event, and traces of it would have been met with in other chapters revealed about the same time. But a perusal of these shows clearly that the Quran's condemnation of idolatry was never marked by the slightest change.

their Lord. [24]Or shall man have what he wishes? [25]But for Allah is the Hereafter and the former (life).

Section 2: **Nothing avails against Truth**

26 And how many angels are in the heavens, whose intercession does not avail at all except after Allah gives permission to whom He pleases and chooses. [27]Surely those who do not believe in the Hereafter name the angels with female names.[a] [28]And they have no knowledge of it. They follow only conjecture, and surely conjecture does not avail at all against the Truth. [29]So shun him who turns his back upon Our Reminder, and desires nothing but this world's life. [30]That is their goal of knowledge. Surely *y*our Lord knows best him who strays from His path and He knows best him who goes aright.

31 And Allah's is whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, that He may reward those who do evil for what they do, and reward those who do good with goodness. [32]Those who avoid the great sins and the indecencies, but the passing idea[b] — surely *y*our Lord is Liberal in forgiving. He knows you best when He brings you forth from the earth and when you are embryos in the wombs of your mothers; so do not ascribe purity to yourselves. He knows him best who guards against evil.

Section 3: **Allah's Power manifested in destroying falsehood**

33 Have *y*ou seen him who turns back, [34]and gives a little, then withholds? [35]Does he have the knowledge of the unseen so that he can see? [36]Or has he not been informed of what is in the scriptures of Moses, [37]and (of) Abraham who fulfilled (commandments)? — [38]that no bearer of burden bears another's burden, [39]and that man can have nothing but what he strives for, [40]and that his striving will soon be seen, [41]then he will be rewarded for it with the fullest reward, [42]and that to *y*our Lord is the goal, [43]and that He it is Who makes (people) laugh and makes (them) weep, [44]and that He it is Who causes death and gives life, [45]and that He creates pairs, the

***a* (27)** The Arabs called the angels daughters of Allah.

***b* (32)** *A passing idea* which leaves no impression on the mind is forgiven, for a mortal cannot be proof against it. But this by no means amounts to an intention or an attempt to commit a sin.

male and the female, [46]from the small life-germ when it is adapted, [47]and that He has ordained the second bringing forth, [48]and that He it is Who gives wealth and contentment, [49]and that He is the Lord of Sirius, [50]and that He destroyed the first Ād,[a] [51]and Thamūd, so He did not spare, [52]and the people of Noah before, surely they were most unjust and inordinate, [53]and the overthrown cities, He hurled down, [54]so there covered them that (punishment) which covered. [55]Which, then, of *y*our Lord's benefits will *y*ou dispute?

56 This is a warner like the earlier warners. [57]The near Event draws nearer.[b] [58]There is none besides Allah to remove it. [59]Do you wonder then at this announcement? [60]And do you laugh and not weep, [61]while you sport? [62]So bow down in prostration before Allah and serve (Him).

***a* (50)** The tribe of Ād is sometimes referred to as the *first* Ād, in contrast with Thamūd, who are called the *second* Ād.

***b* (57)** The near Event is the doom of the Quraish, the overthrow of their power, which was now being utilized against Islam.

Chapter 54

Al-Qamar The Moon

The Moon, the title of this chapter taken from the occurrence of this word in the first verse, was a symbol of the power of the Arabs. Its "splitting apart" indicated the overthrow of the power of the Quraish. After warning the Holy Prophet's opponents, the chapter mentions examples of the people of some previous prophets. Towards the end it contains a prophetical reference to the Battle of Badr. It is undoubtedly an early revelation at Makkah.

Section 1: **Judgment to overtake opponents**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 The hour drew near and the moon was split apart.[a] **2**And if they see a sign, they turn away and say: Strong enchantment![b] **3**And they deny and follow their low desires; and every affair is settled.[c] **4**And certainly narratives have come to them, which should deter — **5**consummate wisdom — but warnings have not availed;[d] **6**so turn away from them. On the day when the Inviter invites them to a hard task — **7**their eyes cast down, they will go

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***a* (1)** The "splitting apart of the moon" in the time of the Holy Prophet is an incident related by a number of his companions; and the reports of this incident are classed as well-known, and are accepted as correct by Bukhari and Muslim. In the whole history of miracles, this is the only miracle of which a contemporaneous record exists. It may have been a particular kind of lunar eclipse, the moon appearing as if it were split into two, a part remaining bright and the other part darkening, or some great commotion might have taken place in the moon or some other unusual phenomenon may have occurred, which might have been made apparent to the naked eye through the strong visionary power of the Holy Prophet. Some commentators are, however, of the opinion that this verse refers to the splitting apart of the moon at the approach of the day of Judgment.

***b* (2)** By calling it *strong enchantment*, they meant that it was a strong magical illusion, not an actual occurrence. But the word *mustamirr*, translated here as *strong*, may also mean *transient*, i.e., a thing which has occurred and passed away, or *continuous* in the sense that such things have been taking place of old.

***c* (3)** The words may mean that *every affair must draw to an end*, the reference being to the opposition which was being offered to the Prophet.

***d* (5)** The fate of the ancients, of whom narratives are recited, should have prevented the opponents of Truth from following in their footsteps.

forth from their graves as if they were scattered locusts, [8]hastening to the Inviter. The disbelievers will say: This is a hard day![a]

9 Before them the people of Noah rejected — they rejected Our servant and called (him) mad, and he was driven away. [10]So he called upon his Lord: I am overcome, so help (me). [11]Then We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring down, [12]and made water to flow forth in the land in springs, so the water gathered together according to a measure already ordained. [13]And We bore him on (a vessel) made of planks and nails, [14]floating on, before Our eyes — a reward for him who was denied.[b] [15]And certainly We left it as a sign, but is there anyone who will be mindful?[c] [16]How (terrible) was then My punishment and My warning! [17]And certainly We have made the Quran easy to remember, but is there anyone who will be mindful?

18 Ād denied; how (terrible) was then My punishment and My warning! [19]Surely We sent on them a furious wind in a day of bitter ill-luck, [20]tearing people away as if they were trunks of uprooted palm-trees. [21]How (terrible) was then My punishment and My warning! [22]And certainly We have made the Quran easy to remember, but is there anyone who will be mindful?

Section 2: **Thamūd and Lot's people**

23 Thamūd rejected the warning. [24]So they said: What! One single mortal from among us! Shall we follow him? We shall then be in sure error and distress. [25]Has the reminder been sent to him from among us? No, he is an insolent liar! [26]Tomorrow they will know who is the liar, the insolent one. [27]Surely We are going to

***a* (8)** The commentators make all verses of this kind apply to the life after death, but comparison with the fate of other people, whose stories are narrated by way of illustration, shows clearly that the punishment of this life is also meant. The *hard day* of trouble overtakes the opponents of Truth in this life as well, and the Hereafter only brings it in a more palpable, and therefore more terrible, form. The Inviter is the Prophet, who invites them to truth, and the graves as applying to this life may signify their homes because they were spiritually dead.

***b* (14)** The boat in which Noah and his companions were saved, spoken of in v. 13 as made of ordinary planks and nails, is here described as floating on *before Our eyes*, meaning that it was the mercy of God that saved the boat.

***c* (15)** The fate of Noah's people is a sign to the deniers of the Holy Prophet. Compare 51:37–46, where a sign is said to be left in the people of Noah, in Moses' enemies, in Ād and in Thamūd.

send the she-camel as a trial for them; so watch them and have patience. 28And inform them that the water is shared between them; (but) every share of the water shall be attended (by the she-camel).[a] 29But they called their companion, so he took (a sword) and hamstrung (her). 30How (terrible) was then My punishment and My warning! 31Surely We sent upon them a single cry, so they were like dry fragments of wood that a fence-maker uses.[b] 32And certainly We have made the Quran easy to remember, but is there anyone who will be mindful?

33 The people of Lot rejected the warning. 34Surely We sent upon them a stone-storm,[c] except Lot's followers; We saved them a little before daybreak — 35a favour from Us. Thus do We reward him who gives thanks. 36And certainly he warned them of Our violent seizure, but they disputed the warning. 37And certainly they endeavoured to turn him from his guests, but We blinded their eyes;[d] so taste My punishment and My warning. 38And certainly a lasting punishment came upon them in the morning. 39So taste My punishment and My warning. 40And certainly We have made the Quran easy to remember, but is there anyone who will be mindful?

Section 3: **Pharaoh and the Prophet's opponents**

41 And certainly the warning came to Pharaoh's people. 42They rejected all Our signs, so We caught them with the seizing of the Mighty, the Powerful. 43Are your disbelievers better than these, or have you (been granted) an immunity in the scriptures? 44Or do they say: We are an army allied together to help each other? 45Soon shall the armies be routed, and they will show (their) backs.[e]

***a* (28)** Water is here said to be shared between them, i.e., *between the people themselves*. "Every share of the water shall be attended" by the she-camel, signifies that the water shall not be withheld from her on account of its division.

***b* (31)** The punishment was a severe earthquake which destroyed people and their houses.

***c* (34)** It was a volcanic eruption. Stones mixed with ashes were rained upon them.

***d* (37)** They endeavoured to prevent him taking his guests into his house, but were unable to see their way to it.

***e* (45)** It is related that the Holy Prophet prayed within his tent on the day of Badr, saying: "O Lord, I beseech You according to Your covenant and Your

46Indeed, the Hour is their promised time, and the Hour is most grievous and bitter.[a] **47**Surely the guilty are in error and distress. **48**On the day when they are dragged into the Fire upon their faces: Taste the touch of hell.[b] **49**Surely We have created everything according to a measure.[c] **50**And Our command is but once, as the twinkling of an eye. **51**And certainly We destroyed your fellows, but is there anyone who will be mindful?

52 And everything they do is in the writings. **53**And everything small and great is written down. **54**Surely the dutiful will be among Gardens and rivers, **55**in the seat of truth, with a most Powerful King.

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promise; O Lord, if such is Your will (i.e., defeat for the Muslims), You may not be served after this day." Abu Bakr took his hand and said: "Allah is sufficient for you, O Messenger of Allah." So the Holy Prophet went out and he recited the verses 45–46 occurring here (Bukhari, 56:89, hadith 2915). This shows how the Holy Prophet and his companions read prophecies of the vanquishment of the opponents in words relating apparently to the Hereafter.

a **(46)** The report referred to in the last footnote shows that the Holy Prophet understood *the Hour* to mean the hour or time of the discomfiture of the Quraish, and looked upon the Battle of Badr as fulfilling this prophecy.

b **(48)** The Quraish who were slain at Badr were removed to a pit for burial, and the Holy Prophet is reported as having addressed them thus: "Surely we have found true what our Lord promised us: have you too found true what your Lord promised you?" The punishment of this life is called here *a touch of hell*.

c **(49)** So that even nations and people cannot go beyond a certain limit.

Chapter 55

Al-Raḥmān The Beneficent

This chapter takes it title from the name of God, *The Beneficent,* with which it begins, and the entire chapter speaks of the beneficence of Allah to human beings both in material and spiritual terms. It opens with the statement that the revelation of the Quran is due to Divine beneficence, and goes on to mention the means for man's physical sustenance created due to the same beneficence. Then it speaks of the judgment to overtake the guilty who reject the spiritual benefits provided for them and the reward of the faithful who avail themselves of those benefits. The chapter belongs to the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Divine beneficence**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 The Beneficent — **2**He taught the Quran.[a] **3**He created man, **4**taught him expression. **5**The sun and the moon follow a reckoning, **6**and the herbs and the trees adore (Him).[b] **7**And the heaven, He raised it high, and He set up the measure,[c] **8**that you may not exceed the measure. **9**So maintain the balance with justice, nor fall short in the measure.

10 And the earth, He has set it for (His) creatures; **11**in it are fruits, and palms having sheathed clusters, **12**and the grain with (its)

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a **(2)** *Al-Raḥmān* is the Beneficent God Who brought things into existence for the sustenance of man before his creation. Man has not earned them. The same Beneficent God, we are here told, has taught the Quran, which is a necessity for the spiritual life of man. It is a Divine gift for the spiritual sustenance of man, like so many gifts for his physical sustenance.

b **(6)** Everything created, from those large bodies in the heavens to the smallest herbs that grow on land, follows a law. Is not, then, a law needed for the spiritual perfection of man? *Najm* means *star* as well as *herb.*

c **(7)** The word *mīzān* in the Quran does not signify a pair of scales for weighing things, but *a measure*, as signifying *any standard of comparison, estimation*, or *judgment*, and the term is here, as elsewhere, used in this broad sense. See 57:25, where the *mīzān* is that *which enables people to be just in their actions*. See also 42:17 footnote.

husk and fragrance.[a] [13]Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?[b]

14 He created man from dry clay like earthen vessels, [15]and He created the jinn of a flame of fire.[c] [16]Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

17 Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests.[d] [18]Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

19 He has made the two seas to flow freely — they meet: [20]between them is a barrier which they cannot pass.[e] [21]Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [22]From them both, come forth pearls, large and small. [23]Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [24]And His are the ships rising high in the sea like mountains. [25]Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

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a **(12)** The *husk* or the outer covering is generally considered to be a worthless thing. In speaking of it as one of the bounties of God it is hinted that even the husk can be turned into a useful and valuable thing. In contrast with the husk is mentioned the fragrance, which resembles the spirit in the body. Neither should the outer form of the Divine law be considered to be a thing of no use, nor should the spirit of the law be neglected.

b **(13)** This verse is repeated several times in this chapter. In the original the dual form is used rather than the plural, and thus what is translated here as *your Lord* is *the Lord of you two*. The dual form is sometimes used in Arabic to give force to the meaning. If the dual is taken literally, the two classes addressed are the believers and the disbelievers or the strong and the weak, divisions which are of frequent occurrence in the Quran. Believers and disbelievers are specially referred to in the concluding words of the last chapter (54:47–55).

c **(15)** For the creation of jinn from fire see 7:12, 15:27 and footnotes there, where it is contrasted with the creation of man from earth.

d **(17)** The two Easts and the two Wests signify the different points of the horizon at which the sun rises and sets at the summer and winter solstice. In modern terminology, the two Easts are the Near or the Middle East and the Far East; the two Wests are Europe and America.

e **(20)** The two seas are mentioned in 25:53 and 35:12 as the sweet-water sea and the salt-water sea. See footnote on 25:53. In 35:12, as here, it is stated also that from both seas fresh flesh and ornaments are obtained; the significance being that useful men would continue to arise from among both believers and non-believers. Some understand that the Red and the Mediterranean Seas are meant. These seas were separated formerly, but are now united by the Suez Canal, and the verse is considered to contain a prophetical mention of this union.

Section 2: **Judgment of the guilty**

26 Everyone on it passes away — **27**and there endures forever the person of *y*our Lord, the Lord of glory and honour. **28**Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? **29**All those in the heavens and the earth ask of Him. Every moment He is in a state (of glory). **30**Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

31 Soon shall We apply Ourselves to you, O you two armies.[a] **32**Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? **33**O assembly of jinn and people, if you are able to pass through the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass through. You cannot pass through but with authority.[b] **34**Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? **35**Flames of fire and sparks of brass will be sent upon you, then you will not be able to defend yourselves.[c] **36**Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

37 So when the heaven is split apart, so it becomes red like red hide. **38**Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? **39**So on that day neither man nor jinn will be asked about his sin. **40**Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? **41**The guilty will be known by their marks, so they shall be seized by the forelocks and the feet. **42**Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? **43**This is the hell which the guilty deny. **44**Round about shall they go between it and hot, boiling water. **45**Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Section 3: **Reward of the righteous**

46 And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two Gardens.[d] **47**Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

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a **(31)** The two armies here are the believers and the disbelievers, and Allah's applying Himself to them signifies the judging of their case so that each should have its reward or punishment.

b **(33)** The jinn and the people of this verse are the great and the small opponents of the Holy Prophet or the foreigners and the Arabs. (*Editor's Note:* The words "You cannot pass through but with authority" may also be rendered as: "You cannot escape from the kingdom (of Allah)." This may be a reference to man's flights into space, the meaning being that man cannot escape the laws and judgment of God whether on the earth or anywhere beyond it.)

c **(35)** This seems to be a reference to the terrible weapons of modern warfare. See also 73:17–18.

d **(46)** The reward of the righteous is spoken of here as two Gardens, i.e.,

48Full of varieties. 49Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 50In both of them are two fountains flowing. 51Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 52In both of them are pairs of every fruit. 53Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 54Reclining on beds, whose inner coverings are of silk brocade. And the fruits of the two Gardens are within reach. 55Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 56Therein are those restraining their glances, whom no man nor jinn has touched before them. 57Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 58As though they were rubies and pearls.[a] 59Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

60 Is the reward of goodness anything but goodness? 61Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

62 And besides those two are two (other) Gardens.[b] 63Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 64Both of deepest green. 65Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 66In both of them are two springs gushing forth. 67Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 68In both of them are fruits and palms and pomegranates. 69Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 70Therein are goodly beautiful ones.[c] 71Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 72Pure ones confined to pavilions. 73Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 74No man nor jinn has touched them before them. 75Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 76Reclining on green cushions and beautiful carpets. 77Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? 78Blessed be the name of *y*our Lord, the Lord of Glory and Honour!

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a Garden in this life and a Garden in the Hereafter. The Garden of this life is the spiritual bliss which the righteous find here in the doing of good, of which gardens and rivers and fruits are symbols. There may also be a deeper reference here to the worldly conquests which the Muslims were promised.

***a* (58)** So far as there is a description of the spiritual blessings of the Hereafter in these words, see 52:20 footnote. So far as it relates to this life, the chaste and modest wives of the faithful are meant.

***b* (62)** The faithful are spoken of in the next chapter as belonging to two classes: the ordinary believers, or those on the right hand, and the foremost (56:8, 10); hence the two Gardens of this verse as compared with the two Gardens of v. 46; or, by the two Gardens of v. 46, are meant the Gardens of the Hereafter and by the two Gardens of this verse are meant the Gardens of this world.

***c* (70)** See v. 58 footnote and 52:20 footnote.

Chapter 56

Al-Wāqi'ah The Event

The Event referred to in the first verse, from which the title of this chapter is taken, is the time of the meting out of reward and punishment to the faithful and their opponents respectively. It begins by stating that people will be divided into three classes: the foremost among the faithful, the other believers and the opponents. Then it speaks of the judgment upon them, the three classes each receiving what they deserve. The chapter is an early revelation at Makkah.

Section 1: **Three classes of people**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 When the Event comes to pass [a] — **2**there is no denying its coming to pass — **3**degrading (some), exalting (others) — **4**when the earth is shaken with a (severe) shaking, **5**and the mountains are crumbled to pieces,[b] **6**so they are as scattered dust, **7**and you are three sorts.

8 So those on the right hand; how (happy) are those on the right hand! **9**And those on the left; how (wretched) are those on the left! **10**And the foremost (in doing good) are the foremost (in reaping reward) — **11**these are drawn near (to Allah). **12**In Gardens of bliss. **13**A multitude from among the first, **14**and a few from among those of later times,[c] **15**on thrones well-woven, **16**reclining on them, facing each other. **17**Round about them will go youths never altering in age,[d] **18**with goblets and ewers, and a cup of pure drink — **19**they are not affected with headache by it, nor are they intoxicated,

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***a* (1)** The Quran speaks of the *Hour* or the *Event* not only as signifying the Resurrection, but also very frequently as signifying the doom of its opponents. That doom was, in fact, a foretaste of what they would suffer in the life after death; this is made clear in v. 3.

***b* (5)** The crumbling of the mountains signifies the fall of great opponents; see 20:105 footnote.

***c* (14)** Those who accepted the Holy Prophet in the earlier stages of his mission, and had to make greater sacrifices, had a greater reward; but there were others who waited until Islam was established in the land and made no sacrifices.

***d* (17)** Because there is no decay in the life after death.

[20]and fruits that they choose, [21]and flesh of fowl that they desire, [22]and pure, beautiful ones, [23]like hidden pearls. [24]A reward for what they did. [25]They hear therein no idle or sinful talk — [26]but only the saying, Peace! Peace![a]

27 And those on the right hand; how (happy) are those on the right hand! [28]Amid thornless lote trees, [29]and clustered banana trees, [30]and extensive shade, [31]and water gushing, [32]and abundant fruit, [33]neither failing, nor forbidden, [34]and exalted couches. [35]Surely We have created them as a (new) creation,[b] [36]so We have made them virgins, [37]loving, equals in age,[c] [38]for those on the right hand. [39]A multitude from among the first, [40]and a multitude from among those of later times.[d]

Section 2: **The guilty**

41 And those on the left hand; how (wretched) are those on the left hand! [42]In hot wind and boiling water, [43]and shadow of black smoke, [44]neither cool nor refreshing. [45]Surely they lived before that in ease. [46]And they persisted in the great violation.[e] [47]And they used to say: When we die and become dust and bones, shall we then indeed be raised, [48]or our forefathers? [49]Say: The ancients and those of later times [50]will surely be gathered together for the appointed hour of a known day. [51]Then shall you, O you who are in error and deny, [52]eat from the tree of Zaqqūm, [53]and fill (your) bellies with it; [54]then drink after it boiling water; [55]and drink as drinks the thirsty camel. [56]This is their entertainment on the day of Recompense.

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a **(26)** After various blessings are enumerated, their true nature is depicted in one word, *Peace*. Peace in this world, and Peace in the Hereafter, such is the message of Islam.

b **(35)** These words show that the blessings of the next life, whether shades or trees or water or fruits, are all the fruits of deeds which have been *created as a new creation.*

c **(37)** As shown in 52:20 footnote, words primarily applicable to women are used to describe some blessings of the next life because womanhood stands as a symbol of purity and beauty. “Equals in age”, as already shown in 38:52 footnote, signifies that the growth of those blessings begins with the growth of spiritual life in a person.

d **(40)** These verses do not contradict verses 13 and 14, as the earlier verses speak only of those who were foremost in accepting the Holy Prophet.

e **(46)** That is, the violation of Divine commandments.

57 We have created you, why do you not then accept? **58**Do you see (the semen) which you emit? **59**Is it you that create it or are We the Creator? **60**We have ordained death among you and We are not to be overcome, **61**that We may change your state and make you grow into what you do not know.[a] **62**And certainly you know the first growth, why do you not then be mindful?

63 Do you see what you sow? **64**Is it you that cause it to grow, or are We the Causer of growth? **65**If We pleased, We would make it chaff, then would you lament: **66**Surely we are burdened with debt, **67**indeed, we are deprived. **68**Do you see the water which you drink? **69**Do you bring it down from the clouds, or are We the Bringer? **70**If We pleased, We could make it saltish; why do you not then give thanks? **71**Do you see the fire which you kindle? **72**Is it you that produce the trees for it, or are We the Producer? **73**We have made it a reminder and an advantage for the travellers of the desert.[b] **74**So glorify the name of *y*our Lord, the Incomparably Great.

Section 3: **Judgment is inevitable**

75 But indeed, I swear by revelation of portions (of the Quran)![c] — **76**and it is a great oath indeed, if you knew — **77**surely it is a bountiful Quran, **78**in a book that is protected, **79**which none touches but the purified ones.[d] **80**A revelation from the Lord of

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a **(61)** In the next life, the present state will be changed, and people will be made to grow into a new creation, which they *do not know.* It is not the material body of this life, but a new body which grows out of the deeds of a person.

b **(73)** The fire burned at night points out to the desert traveller a habitation of people, where he will be welcome.

c **(75)** The meaning adopted suits the context. See 53:1 footnote, where it is shown that the word *najm* meaning *star,* used here as the plural *nujūm,* means also *a portion of the Quran.* The significance of the oath is that every portion of the Quran bears evidence to its own truth.

d **(79)** The Quran is called *karīm* (*bounteous* or *bountiful*) on account of the benefit which it brought to humanity. V. 78 speaks of it as being protected, by which is meant not only that it will be protected against all attempts to destroy it, but also that it will be protected in all its purity in writing. V. 79 states that it can be touched only by those purified by God. This shows that an understanding of the Quran is granted only to those who are pure in heart. It also shows that the Quran should not be touched by one who is impure. Hence the companions were

the worlds. [81]Is it this announcement that you disdain? [82]And make your denial your means of subsistence.[a] [83]Then why not, when (the soul) comes up to the throat, [84]and you at that time look on — [85]and We are nearer to it than you, but you do not see — [86]then why do you not, if you are not held under authority, [87]send it back, if you are truthful?[b]

88 So if he is one of those drawn near (to Allah), [89]then (he has) happiness and bounty and a Garden of bliss. [90]And if he is one of those on the right hand, [91]then peace to *y*ou from those on the right hand. [92]But if he is one of the rejectors, the ones in error, [93]he has an entertainment of boiling water, [94]and burning in hell. [95]Surely this is a certain truth. [96]So glorify the name of *y*our Lord, the Incomparably Great.

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forbidden to carry the Quran to an enemy's country (Bukhari, 56:129, hadith 2990). This further shows that the Quran existed in a written form, as a book, from the first.

a **(82)** The meaning is that you are bent upon giving the lie to the Quran to such an extent as if to give it the lie were your means of subsistence, without which you could not live.

b **(87)** The meaning is that if you are your own masters, and not subject to the authority of a Higher Power, why can you not resist death when it comes to you?

Chapter 57

Al-Ḥadīd Iron

In reference to the punishment of the opponents who were bent on extirpating Islam with the sword, this chapter is entitled *Iron,* from the word occurring in v. 25. It opens with a prophecy of the future conquests of Islam, for which Muslims will have to make sacrifices. Then it speaks of the hypocrites and prophesies that, due to the passage of a long time, the hearts of the believers will harden but again they will receive spiritual life after that. It goes on to say that worldly enjoyments are temporary and one should strive for permanent good. The chapter ends with a promise of two kinds of Divine grace which were in store for the believers. Chapters 57–66 constitute the last group of chapters in the Quranic arrangement that were revealed at Madinah. Chapters 57–60, 65 and 66 were revealed in the period 4 A.H. to 7 A.H.

Section 1: **Establishment of the Kingdom of God**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares the glory of Allah, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. **2**His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes death, and He is Powerful over all things. **3**He is the First and the Last and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is Knower of all things.[a]

4 He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and He is established on the Throne of Power. He knows what goes down into the earth and what comes forth out of it, and what comes down from heaven and what goes up to it. And He is with you wherever you are. And Allah is Seer of what you do. **5**His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; and to Allah are (all) affairs returned. **6**He makes the night to pass into the day, and makes the day to pass into the night. And He is Knower of what is in the hearts.

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a **(3)** The Holy Prophet has explained the four attributes of the Divine Being mentioned here as follows. He is *the First*, so that there was nothing before Him, He is *the Last*, so that there is nothing after Him, He is *the Manifest*, or *the Ascendant* over all, so that there is nothing above Him, and He is *the Hidden, the Knower* of the hidden things, so that there is nothing hidden from Him (Sahih Muslim, 48:17, hadith 2713a).

7 Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend (on good works) out of that in which He has made you heirs. So those of you who believe and spend — for them is a great reward. **8**And what reason have you that you do not believe in Allah? And the Messenger invites you to believe in your Lord, and He has indeed accepted your covenant, if you are believers.[a] **9**He it is Who sends down clear messages to His servant, that he may bring you forth from darkness into light. And surely Allah is Kind, Merciful to you. **10**And what reason have you that you do not spend in Allah's way? And Allah's is the inheritance of the heavens and the earth. Those of you who spent before the Victory and fought are not on a level (with others).[b] They are greater in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards. But Allah has promised good to all. And Allah is Aware of what you do.

Section 2: **Light and life given by the Prophet**

11 Who is it that will offer to Allah a goodly gift, so He will double it for him, and he will have a generous reward? **12**On that day *y*ou will see the believers, men and women, their light gleaming before them and on their right hand.[c] Good news for you this day! — Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them! That is the mighty achievement.

13 On the day when the hypocrites, men and women, will say to those who believe: Wait for us, that we may borrow from your light. It will be said: Turn back and seek a light. Then a wall, with a door in it, will be raised between them. Within it shall be mercy, and outside of it punishment.[d] **14**They will cry out to them:

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a **(8)** The believers, who are addressed, are exhorted to be true to their belief. Belief is thus not mere confession of the Truth but the upholding of it under trials.

b **(10)** By *Victory* here is meant the moral victory gained by the Hudaibiyah truce, or the conquest of Makkah, which made Muslims virtually the masters of the whole of Arabia. The sacrifices made earlier had therefore a greater value on account of the trials which Muslims had then to face.

c **(12)** The light of faith, which was given through the Prophet, will become manifest on the day of Resurrection.

d **(13)** Although the hypocrites remained mixed with the believers for a time, yet separation was brought about even in this life towards the close of the Holy Prophet's life. As the Resurrection will bring hidden things to light, the hypocrites will find themselves devoid of light, because they did not possess the light of faith in this life.

Were we not with you? They will say: Indeed, but you caused yourselves to fall into temptation, and you waited and doubted,[a] and vain desires deceived you, till the threatened punishment of Allah came, and the arch-deceiver deceived you about Allah. **15**So this day no ransom will be accepted from you, nor from those who disbelieved. Your abode is the Fire; it is your patron and evil is the destination.[b]

16 Has not the time yet come for the believers that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and the Truth that is revealed? And (that) they should not be like those who were given the Book before, but time was prolonged for them, so their hearts hardened.[c] And most of them are transgressors. **17**Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its death.[d] Indeed, We have made the signs clear for you that you may understand.

18 The men who give in charity and the women who give in charity and set apart for Allah a goodly portion, it will be doubled for them, and theirs is a generous reward. **19**And those who believe in Allah and His messengers, they are the truthful and the faithful ones with their Lord. They have their reward and their light. And those who disbelieve and reject Our messages, they are the inmates of hell.

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a **(14)** The hypocrites hoped that the Muslims would be annihilated by their powerful opponents.

b **(15)** The Fire is here called a *maulā*, or a *friend* or *patron*, of the disbelievers, thus showing that it is for their good that they will have to undergo the suffering of fire. Hell is elsewhere also represented to be a place or a state which will ultimately lead to the purification of man, as fire purifies gold of dross. The process of purification, which is in other words *hell*, is thus a necessary stage in the spiritual perfection of those who do not avail themselves of the opportunity granted to them in this life.

c **(16)** This verse speaks of Muslims of a later age, for it compares their case to those who were given the scriptures before them and then *a long time having passed over them*, their hearts hardened. They are reminded that after the passing of a long time, they will fall off from the high standard of the earlier generations, and their hearts will be hardened like the hearts of the earlier people.

d **(18)** Having spoken of the falling off of the Muslims of a later age, the good news is here announced that, after that, the dead earth will be generated with a new life, the life spiritual. The next verse then goes on to add that it will be through the sacrifices of a part of them that the Muslim nation will again be raised to eminence.

Section 3: **Truth shall be established**

20 Know that this world's life is only an idle sport and play and an attraction and boasting among yourselves and a race in the multiplication of wealth and children.[a] It is as rain, whose causing the vegetation to grow pleases the tillers, then it withers away so that *y*ou see it turning yellow, then it becomes chaff.[b] And in the Hereafter is a severe punishment, and (also) forgiveness from Allah and (His) pleasure.[c] And this world's life is nothing but a source of vanity.

21 Vie with one another for forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden as vast as the vastness of the heaven and the earth [d] — it is prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers. That is the grace of Allah; He gives it to whom He pleases. And Allah is the Lord of mighty grace. **22**No disaster befalls in the earth, or in yourselves, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence [e] — surely that is easy to Allah — **23**so that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor exult in what He has given you. And Allah does not love any arrogant boaster, **24**such as are miserly and enjoin

***a* (20-1)** *This world's life* here means the material side of life. It is entirely a pursuit of unreality. Individuals as well as nations are, as it were, racing for the transitory goods of this life, for means of adorning the outside, for riches and gaiety, utterly neglecting the higher values of life which are pointed out in v. 21.

***b* (20-2)** The material side of life is here likened to the growth of vegetation which flourishes for a time and then decays. Even thus we see individuals and nations rising to prosperity and then falling back on evil days.

***c* (20-3)** Note how Divine forgiveness is constantly mentioned when punishment is spoken of, to show that the attribute of mercy is the predominant attribute of the Divine nature.

***d* (21)** The Garden or the Paradise is here said to be as extensive as the heavens and the earth, and a similar statement occurs in 3:133. It shows clearly that heaven and hell are not the names of two places, but are really two conditions, because if paradise were the name of a particular place, hell could not exist, as paradise would according to these verses extend over the whole of space.

***e* (22)** The book here means Divine knowledge. Disaster is here spoken of as befalling in the earth or in yourselves, i.e., it either affects the people of the world generally or the Muslims in particular. In view of v. 16, relating to the lapse of a long time and the hardening of the hearts of the Muslims, it is easy to see that the disasters which are predicted as befalling the Muslims in the latter days are due to their own falling off from the high standard of life which they were required to follow, and hence the remedy suggested is again the making of sacrifices as pointed out in v. 18.

miserliness on people. And whoever turns back, then surely Allah is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised.

25 Certainly We sent Our messengers with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the measure, that people may conduct themselves with equity.[a] And We sent down iron, in which is great violence and advantages for people,[b] and that Allah may know who helps Him and His messengers, unseen. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.

Section 4: **Double reward for believers**

26 And certainly We sent Noah and Abraham, and We gave prophethood and the Book to their offspring; so some of them go aright, but most of them are transgressors. **27**Then We made Our messengers to follow in their footsteps, and We made Jesus son of Mary to follow, and We gave him the Gospel. And We put compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him. And (as for) monkery, they innovated it — We did not prescribe it to them — only to seek Allah's pleasure, but they did not observe it with its due observance.[c] So We gave those of them who believed their reward, but most of them are transgressors.

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a **(25-1)** See 42:17 footnote and 55:7 footnote. Here the *measure* is spoken of as being sent down with messengers of God along with the Book. Now the Book contains the Divine commandments or the moral code of life, and the measure is therefore clearly the example of the Prophet, who by carrying out the Divine commandments shows how the directions contained in the Book are to be followed.

b **(25-2)** Iron has proved of great utility to man and has played an all-important part in civilization. It should be noted that the *sending down* of a thing also means *causing it to grow* or *bringing the means of it into existence*. Hence we find this expression used in the Quran with reference to the clothes that man wears (7:26), and to cattle (39:6), etc. The mention of *iron* undoubtedly refers to the resistance against the enemy, which as a last resort had to be effected with the sword — *that Allah may know who helps Him and His messengers, unseen*. This help was rendered by the faithful by taking up the sword in defence of the faith.

c **(27)** Muslims were now becoming a great nation, and as they were brought up in the utmost simplicity, and were also enjoined to disdain the gaiety of this life, they are told that while retaining their simplicity of life they should not stoop to practices like that of monkery. They are thus required to keep the balance between the material and moral sides of life. Christians innovated monkery but failed to attain the object for which they adopted it.

28 O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah and believe in His Messenger — He will give you two portions of His mercy,[a] and give you a light in which you shall walk, and forgive you. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful — **29**that the People of the Book may know that they control nothing of the grace of Allah, and that grace is in Allah's hand. He gives it to whom He pleases. And Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.[b]

***a* (28)** By the *two portions of mercy* are meant their portion *in this world* and their portion *in the Hereafter*. A Muslim is thus required to enjoy the worldly benefits but not to the neglect of his moral responsibilities. Christian civilization started with monkery and has ended in engrossment in the world to the utter neglect of the spiritual side. The history of Islam on the other hand shows temporal and spiritual advancement going hand in hand. The only lasting civilization is one which offers a middle course, and chalks out a way, by walking in which man can attain material along with spiritual advancement. Hence the next verse speaks clearly of the People of the Book.

***b* (29)** The People of the Book or the Christians are here told that they do not control Allah's grace. They wanted first to control His spiritual grace by monkery, but failed. Later, they have tried to control His material grace and bounties by their entire engrossment in worldly pursuits, but even their material advancement is leading to their ruin, because it is not being balanced by spiritual progress.

Chapter 58

Al-Mujādilah The Pleading Woman

The title of this chapter is taken from the event narrated at its opening which mentions a woman pleading a complaint about her husband before the Holy Prophet. The husband had, in accordance with an old Arab custom, put her away by calling her as his "mother", which placed the wife in a state where she neither had marital rights nor was divorced. The chapter begins by abolishing this custom. Then it condemns secret counsels, allowing them only for purposes of discussing good works. It ends by cautioning Muslims not to have friendship with those who opposed and conspired against Islam. This chapter was revealed in about 4 A.H.

Section 1: **Safeguarding women's rights**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Part 28

1 Allah indeed has heard the plea of her who pleads with *y*ou about her husband and complains to Allah; and Allah hears the contentions of both of you.[a] Surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing. **2**Those of you who put away their wives by calling them their mothers — they are not their mothers. None are their mothers except those who gave them birth, and they utter indeed a hateful word and a lie. And surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving. **3**And those who put away their wives by calling them their mothers, then go back on what they said, must free a captive before they touch one another. To this you are exhorted; and Allah is Aware of what you do. **4**But he who does not have the means should fast for two months successively before they touch one another, and he who is unable to do so should feed sixty needy ones. That is in order that you may have faith in

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***a* (1)** The woman referred to was Khaulah or Khuwailah, wife of Aus ibn Samit, who was separated by her husband in an old Arab form, the husband saying to the wife, *You are to me as the back of my mother*. See also 33:4 footnote, for this practice of *ẓihār,* and its abolition by Islam. The woman complained about it to the Holy Prophet, who said that, as he had no revelation about it, he could not interfere. Then Aus wanted her to have conjugal relations with him, but she refused and came to the Prophet complaining of his bad temper. The Prophet wanted her to be more lenient but she was not willing. It was then that the Prophet received this revelation, according to which it was necessary that the husband should in such cases make an expiation before re-establishing conjugal rights.

Allah and His Messenger. And these are Allah's limits. And for the disbelievers is a painful punishment.

5 Surely those who oppose Allah and His Messenger will be humbled as those before them were humbled,[a] and indeed We have revealed clear messages. And for the disbelievers is a humiliating punishment. **6**On the day when Allah will raise them all together, then inform them of what they did. Allah records it, while they forget it. And Allah is Witness over all things.

Section 2: **Secret counsels condemned**

7 Do *y*ou not see that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth? There is no secret counsel between three but He is the fourth of them, nor between five but He is the sixth of them, nor between less than that nor more but He is with them wherever they are; then He will inform them of what they did on the day of Resurrection. Surely Allah is Knower of all things.[b]

8 Do *y*ou not see those who are forbidden secret counsels, then they return to what they are forbidden, and hold secret counsels for sin and revolt and disobedience to the Messenger? And when they come to *y*ou they greet *y*ou with a greeting with which Allah does not greet *y*ou,[c] and say within themselves: Why does not Allah punish us for what we say? Hell is enough for them, they will burn in it, and evil is the destination!

9 O you who believe, when you confer together in private, do not give to each other counsel of sin and revolt and disobedience to the Messenger, but give to each other counsel of goodness and observance of duty.[d] And keep your duty to Allah, to Whom you

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a **(5)** Those who would not abide by the Divine commandments regarding the treatment of women are here told that this was not a light matter. They were in the ranks of those who opposed the Prophet.

b **(7)** The hypocrites and the Jews conspired with the enemies of Islam to destroy the Muslim community of Madinah. There is a brief reference to their plots in 4:114: "There is no good in most of their secret counsels". Such plots are mentioned in greater detail here, and they are told that these secret plots are known to Allah, and they cannot succeed in bringing harm to Islam.

c **(8)** The meaning is that they invoke death and destruction for you (i.e., for the Prophet), while Allah wishes that you should live and prosper.

d **(9)** Secret counsels and secret societies are condemned, but private counsels to promote the cause of goodness and service of humanity are quite different from the subversive activities of secret societies.

will be gathered together. [10]Secret counsels are only of the devil that he may cause to grieve those who believe, and he cannot hurt them at all except with Allah's permission. And on Allah let the believers rely.[a]

11 O you who believe, when it is said to you, Make room in assemblies, make room. Allah will give you ample (room). And when it is said, Rise up, rise up.[b] Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, to high ranks. And Allah is Aware of what you do.

12 O you who believe, when you consult the Messenger, offer something in charity before your consultation. That is better for you and purer. But if you do not have (the means), then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. [13]Do you fear that you will not (be able to) give in charity before your consultation? So when you do not do it, and Allah has turned to you (mercifully), keep up prayer and give the due (obligatory) charity and obey Allah and His Messenger. And Allah is Aware of what you do.

Section 3: **Internal enemy to be guarded against**

14 Have *y*ou not seen those who take for friends a people with whom Allah is displeased? They are neither of you nor of them, and they swear falsely, while they know. [15]Allah has prepared for them a severe punishment. Evil indeed is what they do! [16]They take shelter under their oaths, so they turn (people) from Allah's way; for them is a humiliating punishment. [17]Of no avail to them will be their wealth or their children against Allah at all. They are the companions of the Fire; in it they will abide. [18]On the day when Allah will raise them all up, they will swear to Him as they swear to you, and they think that they have some (excuse). Now surely they are the liars. [19]The devil has gained mastery over them, so he has made them forget the remembrance of Allah. They are the devil's party. Now surely the devil's party are the losers.

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a **(10)** Secret societies denounced in the above verses would not be able to achieve their mischievous object against Islam.

b **(11)** The progress of Islam brought large numbers of people into its fold who stood in need of being taught manners as well as morals. In their assemblies they crowded and pressed upon each other in order to be able to sit nearest to the Prophet. The injunction to make room in assemblies means, either that room should be made for others, or that the people should not sit too close to each other.

20 Those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, they shall be among the most degraded. **21**Allah has written down: I shall certainly prevail, I and My messengers. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.[a] **22** You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day[b] loving those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even though they be their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kinsfolk.[c] These are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith, and strengthened them with a Spirit from Himself, and He will make them enter Gardens in which rivers flow, abiding in them. Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him. These are Allah's party. Now surely it is Allah's party who are the successful!

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a **(21)** Note the certain conviction of the final triumph of Truth, which is expressed here. The next verse concludes with similar words: Surely it is Allah's party who are the successful.

b **(22-1)** The Muslims are the people who believe in Allah and the Last Day.

c **(22-2)** In a state of war between the two parties, friendly relations with the hostile tribes were prohibited, and these would have resulted in great harm to the weaker community of the Muslims. As to those who were not actually engaged in hostilities against the Muslims, see the express directions contained in 60:8.

Chapter 59

Al-Ḥashr The Banishment

This chapter deals with the *banishment* of a Jewish tribe, called Bani Nadir, from Madinah. They had made a treaty with the Holy Prophet to remain neutral between him and his enemies from Makkah, but later broke this treaty and made an alliance with the enemies. The chapter deals with their banishment and shows that the hypocrites, after giving them promises of help, failed to fulfil them. It ends with a beautiful exposition of some of the attributes of God. This chapter was revealed in 4 A.H.

Section 1: **The exiled Jews**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah; and He is the Mighty, the Wise. **2**He it is Who caused those who disbelieved from among the People of the Book to go forth from their homes at the first banishment. You did not think that they would go forth, while they thought that their fortresses would defend them against Allah. But Allah came to them from a place they did not expect and cast terror into their hearts — they demolished their houses with their own hands and the hands of the believers. So take a lesson, O you who have eyes![a]

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a **(2)** The Bani Nadir made a treaty with the Holy Prophet to stand neutral between him and his enemies. When he was victorious at Badr, they said that he was the Prophet promised in the Torah, but when the Muslims suffered a loss at Uhud, they repudiated their vow, broke the agreement and tried to make an alliance with the Makkans. The Holy Prophet told the tribe to leave Madinah. They wanted ten days for preparation, but Abdullah ibn Ubayy (the head of the hypocrites) advised them not to leave Madinah but to fight against the Prophet, promising the help of his own men. So they fortified themselves within their strongholds. After having remained besieged for twenty-one days, and having despaired of help from the hypocrites, they surrendered. The Prophet raised the siege on condition that they should depart from Madinah. With the exception of two families that chose to remain at Khaibar, they all went to Syria. The Bani Naḍīr, being granted ten days in which to collect and take with them such of their property as they desired, devoted the time at their disposal to the destruction of their houses, lest they should be a source of strength to the Muslims. What remained of them was demolished by the Muslims.

3 And if Allah had not decreed for them the exile, He would certainly have punished them in this world; and for them in the Hereafter is the punishment of the Fire. **4**That is because they were opposed to Allah and His Messenger, and whoever is opposed to Allah, surely Allah is Severe in retribution. **5**Whatever palm-tree you cut down or leave it standing upon its roots, it is by Allah's permission, and that He may disgrace the transgressors.

6 And whatever Allah restored to His Messenger from them, you did not press forward against it any horse or any riding-camel, but Allah gives authority to His messengers against whom He pleases. And Allah is Powerful over all things. **7**Whatever Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns, it is for Allah and for the Messenger, and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the traveller, so that it is not taken by turns by the rich among you.[a] And whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain (from it); and keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is Severe in retribution. **8**(It is) for the poor who fled, who were driven from their homes and their possessions, seeking grace of Allah and (His) pleasure, and helping Allah and His Messenger. These it is that are the truthful.[b]

9 And those who made their abode in the City (of Madinah) and in faith before them love those who have fled to them, and find in their hearts no need of what they are given, and prefer (them) before themselves, though poverty may afflict them. And whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul, these it is that are the successful.[c] **10**And those who come after them say: Our Lord,

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a **(7)** This verse relates to property acquired in war without fighting, while 8:41 deals with property acquired through fighting. The whole of the property mentioned here was to be distributed in exactly the same manner as the one-fifth of the kind of acquisitions spoken of in 8:41, i.e., for the benefit of the Muslims in general; see footnote under 8:41. The Prophet's share out of this ("for Allah and for the Messenger") was considered part of the public treasury.

b **(8)** It was only the poor among the refugees, who had lost all their wealth and homes and were still so poor that they could not carry on any business of their own, who received something from what the Bani Nadir left.

c **(9)** By *those who made their abode in the City and in faith* are meant *the Anṣār* or *the Helpers*, i.e., the Muslim residents of Madinah. The meaning is that they made an abode in the city of the Prophet and the faith; the faith being likened

forgive us and our brethren who preceded us in faith, and leave no spite in our hearts towards those who believe. Our Lord, surely You are Kind, Merciful.[a]

Section 2: **Hypocrites fail in promise to the Jews**

11 Have *y*ou not seen the hypocrites? They say to their brethren who disbelieve from among the People of the Book: If you are expelled, we certainly will go forth with you, and we will never obey anyone concerning you; and if you are fought against, we will certainly help you. And Allah bears witness that they surely are liars.[b] **12**If they are expelled, they will not go forth with them, and if they are fought against, they will not help them; and even if they help them, they will certainly turn (their) backs; then they shall not be helped. **13**Your fear in their hearts is indeed greater than Allah's. That is because they are a people who do not understand.

14 They will not fight against you unitedly except in fortified towns or from behind walls. Their fighting between them is severe. *Y*ou would think them united, but their hearts are divided. That is because they are a people who have no sense. **15**Like those before them shortly, they tasted the evil consequences of their conduct, and for them is a painful punishment. **16**Like the devil when he says to man: Disbelieve. But when he disbelieves, he says: I am free of *y*ou, surely I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds. **17**So the end of both of them is that they are both in the Fire, to abide in it. And that is the reward of the wrongdoers.

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to a place of abode. *Before them* signifies *before their* (i.e., the *Muhājirīn* or Emigrants) *coming to Madinah.* When the Muslims emigrated from Makkah, the Helpers received them as if they were their brothers, lodging them in their own houses, and many of them were still living in the houses of their benefactors, when the banishment of the Bani Nadir took place. The Helpers were willing that the refugees alone should have a share, and, despite that, they might continue to lodge in their houses.

a **(10)** This verse contains two directions for all future Muslim generations, namely, to pray for the forgiveness of earlier generations that have passed away before them and to pray for their hearts to be free from all spite towards their living Muslim brethren.

b **(11)** The hypocrites deceived the Jews with false promises, and thus encouraged them to fight against the Prophet.

Section 3: **An exhortation**

18 O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah, and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow, and keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is Aware of what you do. **19**And do not be like those who forget Allah, so He makes them forget their own souls. These are the transgressors. **20**Not alike are the companions of the Fire and the owners of the Garden. The owners of the Garden are the achievers.

21 If We had sent down this Quran on a mountain, *y*ou would certainly have seen it falling down, splitting apart because of the fear of Allah. And We set forth these parables to people that they may reflect.

22 He is Allah besides Whom there is no God: the Knower of the unseen and the seen; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful.[a] **23**He is Allah, besides Whom there is no God: the King, the Holy, the Author of Peace, the Granter of Security, Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Supreme, the Possessor of greatness. Glory be to Allah from what they set up as partners (with Him)! **24**He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner: His are the most beautiful names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares His glory; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

***a* (22)** From this verse to the end we have a most beautiful collection of the Divine names.

Chapter 60

Al-Mumtaḥanah The Woman Tested

This chapter is so named because of the command in v. 10 to *test* those women of the idolaters who came to the Muslims for the purpose of embracing Islam, to see if they were sincere in their motives, and in that case to offer them refuge. It opens with an instruction to Muslims not to have loving relations with those enemies who had driven them out from their homes and were bent on destroying them. It goes on to add that friendly relations can be had with those who do not fight against the Muslims or expel them from their homes. This chapter was very likely revealed in 7 A.H.

Section 1: **Friendly relations with enemies**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O you who believe, do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends. Would you offer them love, while they deny the Truth that has come to you, driving out the Messenger and yourselves because you believe in Allah, your Lord?[a] If you have come forth to strive in My way and to seek My pleasure, would you love them in secret? And I know what you conceal and what you manifest. And whoever of you does this, he indeed strays from the straight path.

2 If they overcome you, they will be your enemies, and will stretch forth their hands and their tongues towards you with evil,[b] and they desire that you may disbelieve. **3**Your relationships and your children would not benefit you, on the day of Resurrection — He will decide between you. And Allah is Seer of what you do.

4 Indeed, there is for you a good example in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: We are clear of you and of what you serve besides Allah. We disbelieve in you and there has arisen enmity and hatred between us and you forever until you

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a **(1)** Note that the reason given for not taking the disbelievers as friends is that they are the enemies of Allah and His Messenger, who drove out the Prophet and the Muslims from their homes. Verses 8–9 give a full explanation.

b **(2)** They would kill you with their hands and revile you with their tongues.

believe in Allah alone — except Abraham's saying to his sire: I would ask forgiveness for *y*ou, and I control nothing at all for *y*ou from Allah.[a] Our Lord, on You do we rely, and to You do we turn, and to You is the eventual coming. **5**Our Lord, do not make us a (means of) trial for those who disbelieve, and forgive us, our Lord. Surely You are the Mighty, the Wise. **6**Certainly there is for you in them a good example, for him who hopes for Allah and the Last Day. And whoever turns away, surely Allah is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised.

Section 2: **Friendly relations with non-Muslims**

7 It may be that Allah will bring about friendship between you and those of them whom you hold as enemies. And Allah is Powerful; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[b]

8 Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. Surely Allah loves the doers of justice.[c] **9**Allah forbids you only with regard to those who fight you for religion, and drive you forth from your homes and help (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends of them; and whoever makes friends of them, these are the wrongdoers.

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a **(4)** This sire was not Abraham's father; see also 6:74, 9:114 and 19:47. Abraham's example is quoted to show how loving and tender he was towards his people, yet, when it became clear to him that they were bent upon uprooting the Truth, even Abraham could not maintain relations of friendship with them. The Holy Prophet and his companions were in like manner now obliged to renounce all relationships of friendship with a people who were not only the avowed enemies of the Muslims but also in a state of continual war with them.

b **(7)** This verse makes it clear that the prohibition against friendly relations with the disbelievers was only temporary, to be operative only so long as the war continued. The friendship prophetically referred to here was brought about after the conquest of Makkah.

c **(8)** This verse and the next, revealed at a time when the relations between Muslims and the disbelievers were most strained on account of a continual state of war between the two parties, settle conclusively that friendly relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, as such, are not prohibited. It is in the light of these verses that all the verses forbidding friendly relations with the disbelievers should be read, because here the true principle is revealed in unmistakable language, allowing friendly relations with one class of disbelievers and prohibiting such relations with those of another class.

10 O you who believe, when believing women come to you fleeing, test them. Allah knows best their faith. Then if you know them to be believers, do not send them back to the disbelievers.[a] Neither are these women lawful for them, nor are those men lawful for them. And give those men what they have spent (as dowries on these women); and there is no blame on you in marrying them, when you give them their dowries. And do not hold to the ties of marriage of disbelieving women, and ask for what you have spent, and let the disbelievers ask for what they have spent. That is Allah's judgment; He judges between you.[b] And Allah is Knowing, Wise. **11**And if any part (of the dowries) of your wives has passed away from you to the disbelievers, then your turn comes, give to those whose wives have gone away the like of what they have spent, and keep your duty to Allah in Whom you believe.[c]

12 O Prophet, when believing women come to *y*ou giving *y*ou a pledge that they will not set up any partner with Allah, and will not steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill their children, nor bring a slander which they have forged of themselves, nor disobey *y*ou in what is good, accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them from Allah. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[d] **13**O you who believe,

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a **(10-1)** People continued to embrace Islam at Makkah, although there was now no preacher of the faith there. Bitter persecution often compelled them to flee from their homes. This verse relates to believing women who fled to Madinah under these circumstances. These women were not taken unconditionally; it was necessary that they should be tested. In accordance with this verse, the Holy Prophet obtained the assurance of such women under oath that they had not left their homes except on account of Islam, and for no other motive.

b **(10-2)** The state of permanent warfare between the Muslims and the disbelievers did not allow of any social relationship to be established between the two parties. Hence marriage relationship between Muslim men and disbelieving women, as well as those between Muslim women and the disbelieving men, could no longer be maintained.

c **(11)** It is a case in which a Muslim husband is allowed to recoup the loss sustained of the dowry of a disbelieving wife who has deserted him, from the sum due for the payment of dowry for a Muslim woman who has fled from the disbelievers and joined the Muslims, or from acquisitions gained in war.

d **(12)** Most of the commentators think that the pledge spoken of in this verse was only taken by the Holy Prophet after the conquest of Makkah, when large numbers of women as well as men embraced Islam.

do not take for friends a people with whom Allah is displeased[a] — they indeed despair of the Hereafter, as the disbelievers despair of those in the graves.

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a **(13)** The reference is to the Jews.

(*Editor's Note:* Verses 8 and 9 have already made it clear that friendly relations are only disallowed with those who actually fight against Muslims on account of their religion, and are allowed with all others.)

Chapter 61

Al-Ṣaff Ranks

The title of this chapter is taken from the command in v. 4 to fight in defence of the faith in *Ranks*. It speaks first of Moses and Jesus, and the latter's prophecy regarding the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and this is followed by a prophecy of the triumph of Islam over all other religions. Then it exhorts Muslims to strive hard in the cause of truth, citing the example of Jesus. The date of revelation is very probably 1 or 2 A.H.

Section 1: **Triumph of Islam**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

2 O you who believe, why do you say things which you do not do? **3**It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say things which you do not do.[a] **4**Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks, as if they were a solid wall.[b]

5 And when Moses said to his people: My people, why do you malign me, when you know that I am Allah's messenger to you?[c] But when they deviated, Allah made their hearts deviate. And Allah does not guide the transgressing people. **6**And when Jesus, son of Mary, said: Children of Israel, surely I am the messenger of Allah to you, verifying what is (already) before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad.[d] But when he came to

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a **(3)** It is an exhortation to those who professed belief in the Truth to make their actions correspond with their assertions. The triumph of Truth, which is so definitely foretold in this chapter, could not be brought about by boastful talk but by great deeds of sacrifice, and hence this prelude. Mere words, if not carried into action, are hateful to God. It is deeds that open the way to success.

b **(4)** They had to fight in self-defence; see 2:190, etc.

c **(5)** See 33:69 footnote.

d **(6-1)** We are here told that Jesus had given the good news of the advent of

them with clear arguments, they said: This is clear enchantment.[a]

7 And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah and he is invited to Islam? And Allah does not guide the unjust people.[b] **8**They desire to put out the light of Allah with

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a Prophet whose name was Ahmad coming after him. That our Prophet was known by two names Muhammad and Ahmad is a well-known fact of history. As regards the sayings of Jesus, we have to depend on a Greek translation, in which we find the word *Paraclete*, which is translated in English as *Comforter*. However, the use of the word *Paraclete* in the Greek version, or that of *Comforter* in the English version, does not show what the actual word in the language spoken by Jesus was. But all those qualifications which are given in John 14:16 and 16:7 are met with in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. He is stated to be one who shall abide forever, and so is the Prophet's law; for after him comes no prophet to promulgate a new law. He is spoken of as teaching all things, and it was with a perfect law that the Holy Prophet came. And clearest of all are the words of John 16:12–14: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak; and he will tell you things to come. He will glorify me, …". Now, this prophecy about the *Spirit of Truth*, which is the same as the *Comforter*, clearly stated in John 14:17, establishes the following points: (1) Jesus could not guide into all truth because his teaching was directed only to the reform of the Israelites, and he denounced only their crying evils; but the teaching of the *Comforter* would be a perfect one, guiding people into all truth, and the Quran is the only book which claims to be a perfect law. (2) That he would not speak of himself, but what he shall hear he shall speak; the words conveying exactly the same idea as those of Deut. 18:18: "And I will put My words in his mouth", a qualification which is met with only in the Holy Prophet Muhammad. (3) That he will glorify Jesus, and the Holy Prophet did glorify Jesus by denouncing as utterly false all those calumnies which were heaped upon Jesus and his mother.

Another point worth mentioning is that the different prophecies about the Holy Prophet really refer to the different phases of his life. The two aspects of the life of the Holy Prophet are *jalāl* and *jamāl*, i.e., *an aspect of glory* and *an aspect of beauty*, the first finding its manifestation in the name *Muhammad* and the second in *Ahmad*. Each of the two great prophets, Moses and Jesus, prophesied about the Holy Prophet in words expressing that aspect of his life which was in consonance with his own nature — glory finding greater expression in Moses, who was prophet, lawgiver and king at the same time, and beauty in Jesus, on account of the beauty of his moral teachings, while both these elements were combined in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

a **(6-2)** The Holy Prophet Muhammad is referred to here, as the next verse clearly shows.

b **(7)** The words, "he who forges a lie against Allah and he is invited to Islam", refer to the rejectors who called the truth an enchantment. It was these

their mouths, but Allah will perfect His light, though the disbelievers may be averse. **9**He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions, though those who set up partners (with Allah) are averse.[a]

Section 2: **Establishment of Truth needed sacrifices**

10 O you who believe, shall I lead you to a bargain which will deliver you from a painful punishment? **11**You should believe in Allah and His Messenger, and strive hard in Allah's way with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you, if only you knew! **12**He will forgive you your sins and make you enter Gardens in which rivers flow, and goodly dwellings in Gardens of perpetuity — that is the mighty achievement — **13**and yet another (blessing) that you love: help from Allah and a victory near at hand; and give good news to the believers.[b]

14 O you who believe, be helpers (in the cause) of Allah, as Jesus, son of Mary, said to the disciples: Who are my helpers in the cause of Allah? The disciples said: We are helpers (in the cause) of Allah. So a party of the Children of Israel believed and another party disbelieved; then We aided those who believed against their enemy, and they became predominant.[c]

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people that were invited to Islam, while the Prophet was an inviter, as he is elsewhere called, for instance, 3:193, 20:108. Their polytheistic beliefs are repeatedly called a forgery in the Quran. Or, the Christians are meant who were invited to the Truth, but they forged a lie that Jesus was the son of God and that he took away their sins.

a **(9)** Verses 8 and 9 contain two different prophecies. The first is that all attempts to annihilate Islam will fail, and they did fail. In the second it is affirmed that Islam will be made the predominant religion, the truth of which was witnessed by Arabia in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. But both prophecies have a wider significance. Attempts are still being made to annihilate Islam, and the Divine promise is that all these attempts shall be brought to naught; while the predominance of Islam over all the religions of the world would in time be established, as clearly as it was in Arabia.

b **(13)** The prophecy in the previous verse relates to the Hereafter, while that in this verse relates to the victories of the Muslims over the disbelievers.

c **(14)** The description applies to the triumph of the teachings of Christ over those who opposed the dissemination of his teachings, and speaks prophetically of the ultimate triumph of Islam over all other religions of the world.

Chapter 62

Al-Jumu'ah The Congregation

This chapter is named after the exhortation in v. 9 to Muslims to gather together for prayer on the day of *Congregation* or *Friday*. It states that the Holy Prophet was a purifier and teacher of his immediate followers as well as those to come in later ages. Then it warns Muslims, by referring to the transgressions of the Jews, against observing only the letter of the law while having no understanding of it and thinking of themselves as God's favourites. Lastly, as the Jews had neglected their Sabbath and suffered as a result, Muslims are exhorted to give special importance to the Friday prayer, which in Islam replaces the Sabbath. The date of revelation of this chapter is very probably 1 A.H.

Section 1: **Muslims to receive Divine favours**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah, the King, the Holy, the Mighty, the Wise.

2 He it is Who raised among the illiterates a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His messages and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom — although they were before certainly in manifest error — **3**and others from among them who have not yet joined them. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.[a] **4**That is Allah's grace; He grants it to whom He pleases. And Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.

5 The likeness of those who were charged with the Torah, then they did not observe it, is as the likeness of the donkey carrying books. Evil is the likeness of the people who reject the messages of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

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a **(3)** The significance is that after a time, when the true spirit of Islam would have been lost, a man would be raised who, again receiving the light from the Holy Prophet, would spread the light of Islam in the world. But some commentators understand that non-Arabs, or all Muslims coming after the Prophet, are meant. The Prophet would thus be the teacher forever, through his disciples, and no Israelite prophet would be sent as a teacher to the Muslim community.

6 Say: O you who are Jews, if you think that you are the favourites of Allah to the exclusion of other people, then invoke death, if you are truthful.[a] **7**But they will never invoke it because of what their hands have already done. And Allah is Knower of the wrongdoers. **8**Say: The death from which you flee, that will surely overtake you; then you will be sent back to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, so He will inform you of what you did.

Section 2: **Friday Prayer**

9 O you who believe, when the call is sounded for prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off business. That is better for you, if you know.[b] **10**But when the prayer is ended, disperse in the land and seek of Allah's grace, and remember Allah much, that you may be successful. **11**And when they see trading or entertainment (taking place), they break away to it, and leave *y*ou standing.[c] Say: What is with Allah is better than entertainment and trading. And Allah is the Best of providers.

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a **(6)** See 2:94.

b **(9)** The Friday service, just after noon, is preceded by a sermon. Verses 9–10 show that ordinary business may be carried on by a Muslim on Friday before or after the Friday prayer. Hence, unlike the Jewish and the Christian Sabbaths, it is not necessarily a day of rest. But attendance at these prayers is obligatory, and as soon as the call to prayer is sounded, every Muslim is bound to leave business of every kind and immediately hasten to the mosque. Every nation has a Sabbath, or a so-called day of Divine service set apart from the ordinary week-days, but in practice, the whole day is never given to prayer. In fact, a Muslim, who is allowed to do his ordinary work on Friday, gives more time to his prayers than the majority of those who recognize a seventh day as their Sabbath. The idea underlying the Sabbath is, no doubt, a temporary cessation of material activities, to give place to spiritual exercise. Islam, on the other hand, requires communion with the Divine Being to be observed throughout the entire week, five times daily.

c **(11)** Those spoken of here are apparently the hypocrites. The fact that the next chapter deals with the hypocrites corroborates this.

Chapter 63

Al-Munāfiqūn The Hypocrites

This chapter deals with the hypocrites and condemns hypocrisy. It speaks of their false promises and their desire to see Islam wiped out, and concludes with an exhortation to Muslims not to be led away by love of wealth and offspring. This chapter was revealed very probably in 3 A.H.

Section 1: **The hypocrites**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 When the hypocrites come to *y*ou, they say: We bear witness that *y*ou are indeed Allah's Messenger. And Allah knows *y*ou are indeed His Messenger. And Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are surely liars. **2**They take shelter under their oaths, thus turning (people) from Allah's way. Surely evil is what they do. **3**That is because they believed, then disbelieved; thus their hearts are sealed, so they do not understand.[a]

4 And when *y*ou see them, their appearances please *y*ou; and if they speak, *y*ou listen to their speech. They are like pieces of wood, clad with garments. They think every cry to be against them.[b] They are the enemy, so beware of them. May Allah destroy them! How they are turned away (from truth)! **5**And when it is said to them: Come, the Messenger of Allah will ask forgiveness for you, they turn away their heads and *y*ou see them hindering (others), and they are big with pride. **6**It is the same to them whether *y*ou ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them — Allah will never forgive them. Surely Allah does not guide the transgressing people.

7 They it is who say: Do not spend on those who are with the Messenger of Allah that they may disperse. And Allah's are the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do

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a **(3)** Note how the sealing of hearts is described here. It is a person's own action which is the cause, while the sealing is only the necessary consequence.

b **(4)** By the *cry* is here meant the hostile incursion of the enemy. Whenever there was an incursion of the enemy, the hypocrites showed cowardice and thought that the Muslims would be crushed by their adversaries.

not understand. [8]They say: If we return to Madinah, the mightier will surely drive out the weaker from it. And might belongs to Allah and His Messenger and the believers, but the hypocrites do not know.[a]

Section 2: **An exhortation**

9 O you who believe, do not let your wealth nor your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah; and whoever does that, these are the losers. [10]And spend (on good works) out of what We have given you before death comes to one of you, and he says: My Lord, why did You not grant me respite for a little while (longer), so that I should have given in charity and been among the doers of good deeds? [11]But Allah does not respite a soul, when its term comes. And Allah is Aware of what you do.

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a **(8)** So late as this revelation, the hypocrites considered themselves, in conjunction with their disbelieving friends, to be the stronger party and the Muslims to be the weaker party, whom they could easily drive out of Madinah. But they are told that they themselves will meet with disgrace. Ultimately their opposition came to naught; see 9:101.

Chapter 64

Al-Taghābun Manifestation of Losses

This chapter refers in v. 9 to the day of the *Manifestation of Losses*. It not only warns the disbelievers of the evil consequences of their deeds but also exhorts the believers to continue their march towards spiritual advancement and not to be led away by worldly attractions. Not only will disbelievers find their losses manifested on a certain day, but believers will also find such losses manifested if they have been remiss in fulfilling their obligations. This chapter was revealed in the early days at Madinah.

Section 1: **Disbelievers warned**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah. His is the kingdom, and His the praise; and He is Powerful over all things. **2**He it is Who created you, but one of you is a disbeliever and one of you is a believer. And Allah is Seer of what you do. **3**He created the heavens and the earth with truth, and He shaped you, then made goodly your shapes; and to Him is the destination. **4**He knows what is in the heavens and the earth, and He knows what you hide and what you manifest. And Allah is Knower of what is in the hearts.

5 Has not the story come to you of those who disbelieved before, then they tasted the evil consequences of their conduct, and they had a painful punishment? **6**That is because their messengers came to them with clear arguments, but they said: Shall mortals guide us? So they disbelieved and turned away, and Allah is above all need. And Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praised.

7 Those who disbelieve think that they will not be raised. Say: Indeed, by my Lord! — you will certainly be raised; then you will certainly be informed of what you did. And that is easy to Allah. **8**So believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Light which We have revealed. And Allah is Aware of what you do. **9**The day when He will gather you for the day of Gathering, that is the day of the

Manifestation of losses.[a] And whoever believes in Allah and does good, He will remove from him his evil and make him enter Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them forever. That is the mighty achievement.[b] **10**And those who disbelieve and reject Our messages, they are the companions of the Fire, abiding in it; and evil is the destination.

Section 2: **An exhortation**

11 No calamity befalls but by Allah's permission. And whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart. And Allah is Knower of all things. **12**And obey Allah and obey the Messenger; but if you turn away, the duty of Our Messenger is only to deliver the message clearly. **13**Allah, there is no God but He. And on Allah let the believers rely.

14 O you who believe, surely some among your wives and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them.[c] And if you pardon and forbear and forgive, surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. **15**Your wealth and your children are only a trial, and Allah — with Him is a great reward. **16**So keep your duty to Allah as much as you can, and hear and obey and spend (on good works); it is better for your souls. And whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul, these it is that are the successful. **17**If you set apart for Allah a goodly portion, He will double it for you and forgive you. And Allah is the Multiplier (of rewards), Forbearing, **18**the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Mighty, the Wise.

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a **(9-1)** The day of Resurrection is called the day of *Taghābun* (Manifestation of losses) because the loss that a person suffers is generally hidden from his eyes in this life, and it will be manifest on the day of Judgment.

b **(9-2)** Note that he who acts righteously will have his evil removed, because a change comes over his life. There is no doubt that, when a complete transformation takes place in the life of a person, the consequences of the evil which he might have previously done are wiped out.

c **(14)** It is most often for the sake of one's wife and children that one acts wrongfully towards others. Thus, in some cases, the wife or the children become an enemy to man. Note the use of the word *min,* which shows that it is only *sometimes* that wives or offspring lead a man to an evil course.

Chapter 65

Al-Ṭalāq Divorce

This chapter deals in the first half with certain rules regarding divorce; hence its title. The second half gives a warning to the opponents and shows that the Holy Prophet had brought them light. The date of revelation may be assigned approximately as 6 A.H.

Section 1: **Supplementary divorce rules**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O Prophet, when you divorce women, divorce them for their prescribed period,[a] and calculate the period; and keep your duty to Allah, your Lord. Do not turn them out of their houses — nor should they themselves go forth — unless they commit an open indecency. And these are the limits of Allah. And whoever goes beyond the limits of Allah, he indeed wrongs his own soul. *Y*ou do not know that Allah may, after that, bring about an event (of reunion).[b]

2 So when they have reached their prescribed time, retain them with kindness or part from them with kindness, and call to witness two just ones from among you, and give upright testimony for Allah. With that is instructed he who believes in Allah

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***a* (1-1)** The prescribed time is ordinarily, according to 2:228, three courses. But in the case of pregnant women, and in certain other cases, the prescribed time is laid down in v. 4 of this chapter. It should be noted how every direction in connection with the subject of divorce is followed by the injunction, *keep your duty to Allah*, throughout this chapter. The utmost carefulness must therefore be exercised in the matter of divorce. Divorce is allowed but the right must be used sparingly and under exceptional circumstances.

It is reported that the directions contained in this chapter were needed to correct a mistake made in connection with the law of divorce by Ibn Umar, who divorced his wife when she had her courses. He was told to take her back, as divorce was ineffective unless pronounced when the wife was not in a menstrual period (Bukhari, 68:1, hadith 5251).

***b* (1-2)** The *amr* or *event* here means *reunion*. We are here expressly told that a divorced woman is not to be turned out of the husband's house, because either party may regret the divorce and a reunion may be brought about.

and the Last Day. And whoever keeps his duty to Allah, He ordains a way out for him, [3]and gives him sustenance from where he does not imagine. And whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him. Surely Allah attains His purpose. Allah indeed has appointed a measure for everything.

4 And those of your women who despair of menstruation, if you have a doubt, their prescribed time is three months, and of those, too, who have not had their courses. And the pregnant women, their prescribed time is that they lay down their burden. And whoever keeps his duty to Allah, He makes his affair easy for him. [5]That is the command of Allah, which He has revealed to you. And whoever keeps his duty to Allah, He will remove from him his evils and increase (his) reward for him.

6 Lodge them where you live according to your means, and do not injure them in order to impose hardship upon them. And if they are pregnant, spend on them until they lay down their burden. Then if they suckle for you, give them their recompense, and enjoin one another to do good; and if you disagree, another will suckle for him. [7]Let him who has abundant means spend out of his abundance, and whoever has his means of subsistence restricted for him, let him spend out of what Allah has given him. Allah does not lay on any soul a burden beyond what He has given it. Allah brings about ease after difficulty.[a]

Section 2: **Makkah warned**

8 And how many a town there was which rebelled against the commandment of its Lord and His messengers, so We called it to severe account and We punished it with a stern punishment! [9]So it tasted the evil consequences of its conduct, and the end of its affair was ruin. [10]Allah has prepared for them severe punishment, so keep your duty to Allah, you people of understanding, who believe. Allah has indeed sent down to you a Reminder — [11]a Messenger who recites to you the clear messages of Allah, so that he may bring forth those who believe and do good deeds from

a **(7)** The wife should be lodged where a man himself lives, so that, after divorce, the woman has the full status of a wife so long as the prescribed time has not expired. If a man possesses abundant wealth, he must spend on his wife abundantly.

darkness into light. And whoever believes in Allah and does good deeds, He will make him enter Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them forever. Allah has indeed given him a goodly sustenance.

12 Allah is He Who created seven heavens, and of the earth the like of them (in number). The command descends among them, that you may know that Allah is Powerful over all things, and that Allah encompasses all things in (His) knowledge.[a]

***a* (12)** The statement made here, that there are "seven heavens, and of the earth the like of them", throws light upon what is meant by heavens where the number seven is mentioned. The seven heavens are elsewhere called the *seven ways* (23:17) and the seven earths may therefore be the seven major planets of the solar system, the earth itself being the eighth, their orbits being spoken of as the seven heavens or seven ways. It should, however, be borne in mind that the heavens are often referred to without a limitation of number, and include the whole of the starry creation. Another point worth noting is that the mention of seven heavens does not preclude the existence of more. For the application of the word *seven* and for further discussion, see 2:29 footnote 2.

The descending of the command among these is interpreted by some as meaning the existence of life and death in them.

Chapter 66

Al-Taḥrīm The Prohibition

This chapter is called *The Prohibition* from the statement in v. 1 that the Prophet, as well as those who follow him, should not forbid themselves what Allah has made lawful. It refers to an incident of the Prophet's temporary separation from his wives. The first half speaks of the relations of the Holy Prophet with his wives, while the second refers to the spiritual progress to be made by his faithful followers. The connection between the two is that the spiritual relation between the Prophet and a true follower of his is metaphorically that between husband and wife. In the last two verses both disbelievers and believers are compared to certain women in religious history. The date of revelation may be placed about 7 A.H.

Section 1: **Holy Prophet's domestic relations**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O Prophet, why do *y*ou forbid (*y*ourself) what Allah has made lawful for *y*ou? Do *y*ou seek to please *y*our wives? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[a] **2**Allah indeed has sanctioned for you the expiation of your oaths; and Allah is your Patron, and He is the Knowing, the Wise.[b]

3 And when the Prophet confided some information to one of his wives — but when she disclosed it (to others), and Allah informed him of it, he made known part of it and passed over (another) part. So when he told her of it, she said: Who informed *y*ou of this? He said: The Knowing, the One Aware, informed me.[c]

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a **(1)** The reference here is to the well-known temporary separation from his wives which the Prophet resorted to, on account of his wives demanding more of worldly comforts (see 33:28), regarding which the Holy Prophet made a vow.

b **(2)** The expiation of oaths is sanctioned in 5:89. The custom of *īlā',* or making a vow not to have conjugal relations with one's wife, is mentioned as an introduction to the subject of divorce in 2:226, but it is actually prohibited here.

c **(3)** There is no trustworthy report showing what particular incident is referred to here. But as these verses speak of the temporary separation of the Holy Prophet from his wives, it is likely that this incident was also in connection with that separation. From what is related in connection with this incident, it appears

[4]If both of you (wives) turn to Allah, then indeed your hearts are inclined (to this already); and if you back up one another against him, then surely Allah is his Patron, and Gabriel and the righteous believers, and the angels after that are the aiders. [5]Maybe, his Lord, if he divorce you, will give him in your place wives better than you: submitting (to Allah), believing, obedient (to Allah), penitent, serving (Allah), fasting, widows, and virgins.[a]

6 O you who believe, save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones; over it are angels, stern and strong. They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, but do as they are commanded. [7]O you who disbelieve, make no excuses this day. You are rewarded only as you did.

Section 2: **Progress of the faithful**

8 O you who believe, turn to Allah with sincere repentance. It may be your Lord will remove from you your evil and make you enter Gardens in which rivers flow, on the day on which Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will gleam before them and on their right hands — they will say: Our Lord, make perfect for us our light, and grant us protection; surely You are Powerful over all things.[b] [9]O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites,[c] and remain firm against them, and their abode is hell; and evil is the destination.

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that originally Aishah and Hafsah led this demand and later on the other wives joined. And when the Prophet, on receiving Divine revelation, gave an option to his wives either to remain in his house without more worldly comforts or to part company with him and have the desired comforts, he told Aishah not to take a decision without consulting her parents (Bukhari, 46:25, hadith 2468). Maybe it was this matter which Aishah disclosed to the others, and hence their united decision to remain in the Prophet's house with all the worldly privations.

a **(5)** This shows that all those qualifications which are mentioned here were met with in the Holy Prophet's wives. He had been given a choice to divorce any of his wives whom he did not desire but, when the wives decided not to leave him despite the extreme austerity of his home life, he did not divorce any of them; see 33:51–52.

b **(8)** Paradise is not only a place to enjoy the blessings and reap the reward of one's previous good deeds, but it is also the starting-point of a never-ceasing spiritual advancement. The prayer for the perfection of the light is an unceasing desire for perfection, showing that spiritual progress in that life will be endless.

c **(9)** The verb translated as *strive* is *jāhid*, from which is derived the word *jihād*, and the context shows that by *striving* is not meant the carrying on of a

10 Allah sets forth an example for those who disbelieve — the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were both under two of Our righteous servants, but they acted treacherously towards them, so they (the husbands) did not avail them at all against (the punishment of) Allah, and it was said: Enter the Fire with those who enter.[a]

11 And Allah sets forth an example for those who believe — the wife of Pharaoh, when she said: My Lord, build for me a house with You in the Garden and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from the wrongdoing people.[b] **12**And Mary, the daughter of Amran, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into him of Our inspiration, and she accepted the truth of the words of her Lord and His Books, and she was of the obedient ones.[c]

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war, for war was never proclaimed against the hypocrites, who, in fact, were for all practical purposes treated as Muslims. Therefore, when the Holy Prophet is commanded to carry on a *jihād* against the disbelievers and the *hypocrites*, it is clear that *jihād* is something else than mere fighting.

a **(10)** This is an instance of the followers of prophets going against the principles of their teachers. Those prophets will not be able to save them.

b **(11)** This is an example of good men who are not yet made free from the bondage of sin, for which Pharaoh stands here as a typical example; but they ardently desire to be rid of sin, striving hard to free themselves from all trammels.

c **(12)** The example of the righteous given in this parable illustrates how Divine inspiration is granted to the perfect ones. The words "We breathed into him of Our inspiration" are remarkable. Evidently the word *him* cannot refer to Mary. It is taken by some commentators to refer to Jesus, and thus the meaning is that Mary gave birth to a son who received Divine inspiration. But the reference in the personal pronoun *him* might as well be to the believer for whom Mary is set as an example, and the object of the change might be to draw attention to the fact that it is really the granting of inspiration to the believer that is meant here and not the breathing of a soul.

(*Editor's Note:* Verses 11–12 put before Muslims examples of *women* to follow for reaching the highest degrees of righteousness.)

Chapter 67

Al-Mulk The Kingdom

From here to the end of the Holy Quran there are 48 chapters all revealed during the Makkah period of the Holy Prophet's life, except ch. 110 which was revealed near the very end of his life. All of these contain prophecies of the greatness to which Islam would rise during the time of the Holy Prophet and later into the distant future, even though these are mostly very early revelations. The title of this chapter is taken from the statement in the first verse that *The Kingdom* is in Allah's hand, meaning that the prophesied Kingdom of God was now about to be established on earth. The chapter then draws attention to the working of laws in the physical world, from which it is inferred that there is a law relating to good and evil working in the spiritual world. The second half of the chapter speaks of the doom that awaits those who disbelieve due to their ungratefulness to God.

Section 1: **The Kingdom of God**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Part 29

1 Blessed is He in Whose hand is the Kingdom, and He is Powerful over all things,[a] **2**Who created death and life that He might try you (as to) which of you is best in deeds.[b] And He is the Mighty, the Forgiving, **3**Who created the seven heavens alike.[c] *Y*ou see no anomaly in the creation of the Beneficent. Then look

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a **(1)** The short chapters revealed at Makkah, which are no doubt generally among the earliest revelations of the Holy Prophet, often speak most forcibly of the greatness and glory of Allah. The statement here refers prophetically to the kingdom of Islam, which was really the Kingdom of God.

b **(2)** The law of life and death or growth and decay works throughout nature, but in case of man death does not end his life, but is really the starting-point for a new life of spiritual progress. Life to him below is a trial, i.e., a means of bringing to light his hidden qualifications for the performance of good. There is also the life and death of nations. Nations that work evil are swept away, and others are raised in their place that they may do good.

c **(3-1)** *Alike* (*ṭibāq*) here means conforming or corresponding to one another. This significance suits the context, for the verse goes on to describe the uniformity prevailing in nature.

again: Can *y*ou see any disorder?[a] **4**Then look again and again — *y*our sight will return to *y*ou confused, while it is fatigued.

5 And certainly We have adorned this lower heaven with lamps and We make them means of conjectures for the devils,[b] and We have prepared for them the punishment of burning. **6**And for those who disbelieve in their Lord is the punishment of hell, and evil is the destination. **7**When they are cast into it, they will hear a loud moaning of it as it heaves, **8**almost bursting for fury. Whenever a group is cast into it, its keepers ask them: Did not a warner come to you? **9**They say: Yes, indeed a warner came to us, but we denied and said: Allah has revealed nothing; you are only in great error.

10 And they say: If only we had listened or pondered, we should not have been among the inmates of the burning Fire. **11**Thus they will confess their sins; so far (from good) are the inmates of the burning Fire. **12**Those who fear their Lord in secret, for them is surely forgiveness and a great reward. **13**And (whether you) conceal your word or speak it openly, truly He is Knower of what is in the hearts. **14**Does He, Who created, not know? And He is the Knower of subtleties, the Aware.

Section 2: **The disbelievers' Doom**

15 He it is Who made the earth subservient to you, so go about in its spacious sides, and eat from His sustenance. And to Him is the rising (after death). **16**Do you feel secure that He Who is in the heaven will not make the earth to swallow you up? Then — lo! —

***a* (3-2)** Attention is here called to the regularity and uniformity of the laws working in nature. There is no anomaly, so that things belonging to the same class should be subject to different laws, nor is there a disorder, so that a law should not work uniformly. The verse, while calling attention to the existence of a Supreme Being, as witnessed in the regularity and uniformity of the laws working in creation, draws special attention to spiritual laws, which also work uniformly, and thus evil and good must each bring its special reward.

***b* (5)** The lamps with which the lower heaven is lighted, i.e., the stars, are made the means of conjectures regarding the future by the astrologers. The word *rujūm* is the plural of *rajm* which, according to many early authorities, is used to signify *conjectures* and *surmises.* Thus the astrologers, who deceived people by telling them many things which they posed as having learned from the stars, are referred to here as the devils making conjectures.

it will shake.[a] **17**Or do you feel secure that He Who is in the heaven will not send on you a violent wind?[b] Then shall you know how (truthful) was My warning! **18**And certainly those before them denied, then how (terrible) was My disapproval!

19 Do they not see the birds above them spreading and contracting (their wings)? Nothing upholds them except the Beneficent.[c] Surely He is Seer of all things. **20**Or who is it that will be an army for you to help you against the Beneficent? The disbelievers are only in delusion. **21**Or who is it that will give you sustenance, if He should withhold His sustenance? But they persist in disdain and aversion.[d] **22**Is, then, he who goes along falling upon his face better guided or he who walks upright on a straight path?

23 Say: He it is Who brought you into being and made for you ears and eyes and hearts. Little thanks you give! **24**Say: He it is Who multiplies you in the earth and to Him you will be gathered. **25**And they say: When will this promise come to pass, if you are truthful? **26**Say: The knowledge is with Allah only, and I am only a plain warner. **27**But when they see it near at hand, the faces of those who disbelieve will be grieved, and it will be said: This is what you used to call for.

28 Say: Have you considered if Allah should destroy me and those with me — rather He will have mercy on us — yet who will

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a **(16)** God is spoken of here as being in heaven; elsewhere He is spoken of as being in heaven and earth alike (43:84); and again He is spoken of as being "with you wherever you are" (57:4). The one thing certain is that God is not in one particular place to the exclusion of other places. Punishment sent by God is often described as coming from heaven, and thus He is spoken of here as being in heaven, or above all, so that none can avert the punishment sent by Him.

b **(17)** In the well-known Battle of the Allies in 4 A.H., when an army of twenty thousand was besieging Madinah and the Muslims were almost helpless against this mighty force, it was a violent wind which put all the armies to flight; see 33:9.

c **(19)** The withholding of the birds signifies the delay of the punishment, for birds are spoken of as following a victorious army; see 16:79 footnote. The question in the next verse as to who will help them corroborates this significance.

d **(21)** This is also a prophecy. Their sustenance was withheld in the great famine which prevailed at Makkah, prophecies regarding which are met with in the Quran in early as well as later revelation; see 44:10.

protect the disbelievers from a painful punishment?[a] **29**Say: He is the Beneficent — we believe in Him and on Him do we rely. So you will come to know who it is that is in clear error. **30**Say: Have you considered if your water should subside, who is it then that will bring you flowing water?

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a **(28)** The meaning is that the guilty will by all means be called to account and suffer the evil consequences of what they have done, whether the Prophet and his companions live or die, but the uncertainty as to the reward of the righteous is at once removed by the words *rather He will have mercy on us*. The particle *au* (usually meaning 'or') can mean *rather* as well.

Chapter 68

Al-Qalam The Pen

This chapter begins by presenting the inkstand, *the pen* and all writings to bear witness that the Holy Prophet's utterances are not those of an insane person, as alleged by his opponents; hence its name *The Pen.* It goes on to set forth a parable foretelling that the struggles of his opponents will fail and they will regret what they did. It concludes by referring to the example of Jonah, to show the need to wait patiently for the eventual prophesied success. This chapter is undoubtedly one of the earliest revelations, and may be placed third in the chronological order of revelation. It is notable that even such an early revelation declares the Quran to be a reminder for all the nations of the world, as stated in its last verse.

Section 1: **Not a madman's message**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 (By) the inkstand[a] and the pen and what they write! **2**By the grace of *y*our Lord *y*ou are not mad.[b] **3**And surely *y*ours is a reward

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a **(1)** *Nūn,* with which this verse begins, while being a letter of the Arabic alphabet, is also a word meaning *inkstand*. The context, which mentions pen and writing, favours this interpretation. It is not an abbreviation such as those occurring at the commencement of chapters 2, 3, etc. The Quran, in the earliest abbreviation used in it, gives us a clue to the significance of the abbreviations occurring in it by using *nūn*, which is also a word.

The verse also has a wider significance, indicating that the Quran will always continue to occupy a unique position among all the books which are ever written. This unique position consists in its completeness and exhaustive dealing with all the truths about religion. See also 25:33 footnote.

b **(2)** The first allegation of the disbelievers against the Holy Prophet was that he was mad. This allegation is dealt with in this chapter. The first answer to it is contained in verses 1–2. In v. 1, attention is really called to the fact that the Prophet's prophecies about his own future and the fate of the opponents, which were already put down in writing, would prove that the Prophet was not mad, for the ravings of a madman could not bear fruit. It should be noted that the Quran again and again challenges its opponents to write down their prophecies about the Holy Prophet, thus showing that its own were actually written down from the first, as this chapter is one of the earliest revelations. See also v. 47 and 52:41.

never to be cut off.[a] [4]And surely *y*ou have sublime morals.[b] [5]So *y*ou will see, and they (too) will see, [6]which of you is mad. [7]Surely *y*our Lord knows best who strays from His path, and He knows best those who go aright.

8 So do not obey the rejectors. [9]They wish that *y*ou should soften, so they (too) would soften (in their opposition).[c] [10]And do not obey any mean swearer, [11]defamer, going about with slander, [12]hinderer of good, overstepping the limits, sinful, [13]dishonourable, (and) besides all that, notoriously mischievous[d] — [14]because he possesses wealth and sons. [15]When Our messages are recited to him, he says: Stories of the ancients! [16]We shall brand him on the snout.[e]

17 We shall try them as We tried the owners of the garden, when they swore to pluck its fruits in the morning,[f] [18]and would not set aside a portion (for the poor). [19]But a visitation from *y*our Lord came upon it, while they slept. [20]So it became as black,

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***a* (3)** The Prophet is further told that his exertions will be followed by a reward which will never be cut off, i.e., he will be successful in establishing a religion whose blessings will continue forever, while a madman's actions cannot bear any fruit. Thus there is not only a clear prophecy here of the final triumph of the Prophet over his enemies, but there is also a prophecy that what is stated in the Quran rests on such a firm foundation that it will never prove untrue.

***b* (4)** The Prophet's possession of the most sublime morals is a further proof that he cannot be a madman. He had already won from his contemporaries the recognition of his sublime morality, who had given him the title of *al-Amīn, the faithful one*. By calling him *al-Amīn*, the people expressed their high appreciation of his sublime morality, as if he were the one, and *only one*, as indicated by prefixing *al*, who could be trusted in all matters. His moral greatness was thus testified to by Aishah, than whom none was more intimate with the Prophet, who said: *His morals are the Quran*; meaning that all the pictures of sublime morality depicted by the Quran are really a glimpse of the moral greatness of the Prophet.

***c* (9)** The first desire of the Quraish was no doubt, owing to their great respect for the Holy Prophet, that he should not condemn their evil deeds in strong language, and thus they too would not be severe in opposition to him.

***d* (13)** The description applies to all leaders of opposition to Truth. As against the sublime morals of the Inviter to Truth, verses 10–13 describe the low state of morality of those who do not care for the moral values of life.

***e* (16)** *Branding on the snout* is equivalent to *bringing a man to disgrace which sticks to him.*

***f* (17)** This parable sets forth the ultimate fate of the opponents. It is one of the earliest prophecies, and it foretells the failure of opposition and shows also that the Prophet's heart was full of sympathy for the poor from the very first.

barren land — [21]then they called out to one another in the morning, [22]saying: Go early to your crop, if you are to pluck (the fruit). [23]So they went, saying to one another in low voices: [24]No poor man shall enter it today against you.

25 And in the morning they went, having the power to prevent. [26]But when they saw it, they said: Surely we are in error; [27]indeed, we have been deprived. [28]The best of them said: Did I not say to you, Why do you not glorify (Allah)? [29]They said: Glory be to our Lord! Surely we were wrongdoers. [30]Then they turned to one another, blaming each other. [31]Said they: O woe to us! Surely we were inordinate — [32]maybe, our Lord will give us instead one better than it — surely to our Lord we make petition.[a] [33]Such is the punishment. And certainly the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if only they knew![b]

Section 2: **A Reminder for the nations**

34 Surely the dutiful have with their Lord Gardens of bliss. [35]Shall We then make those who submit as the guilty? [36]What is the matter with you? How do you judge? [37]Or do you have a book in which you read [38]that you shall surely have in it whatever you choose? [39]Or do you have covenants from Us on oath, extending to the day of Resurrection, that you shall surely have whatever you judge? [40]Ask them which of them will vouch for that. [41]Or do they have associate-gods? Then let them bring their associate-gods, if they are truthful.

42 On the day when there is a severe affliction, and they are called upon to prostrate themselves, but they are not able — [43]their looks cast down, humiliation will cover them. And they were indeed called upon to prostrate themselves, while yet they were safe.

***a* (32)** It shows that while the Quran threatened the opponents with punishment, it foretold at the same time that they would accept the Truth ultimately. This happened about twenty years afterwards. All their exertions came to naught and their power in the land was frustrated, but they then saw their error, came over to Islam, and were made the rulers of vast kingdoms. Thus their Lord gave them instead *one better*, because they made their petition to Him.

***b* (33)** The separate mention of the punishment of the Hereafter is clear evidence that the punishment spoken of in the previous verses, referred to at the beginning of this verse, was a punishment which was to overtake them in this life, and thus to afford a proof of the truth of the chastisement of the Hereafter.

44So leave Me alone with him who rejects this announcement. We shall overtake them by degrees, from where they do not know. **45**And I bear with them, surely My plan is firm. **46**Or do *y*ou ask from them a reward, so that they are burdened with debt? **47**Or is (the knowledge of) the unseen with them so that they write (it) down?[a]

48 So wait patiently for the judgment of *y*our Lord, and do not be like the Companion of the fish,[b] when he cried while he was in distress. **49**If favour from his Lord had not reached him, he would certainly have been cast down on naked ground, while he was blamed. **50**Then his Lord chose him, and He made him one of the righteous. **51**And those who disbelieve would almost strike *y*ou down with their eyes when they hear the Reminder, and they say: Surely he is mad![c] **52**And it is nothing but a Reminder for the nations.

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a **(47)** Writing is always mentioned in connection with the knowledge of the unseen, because it is writing alone that makes the truth of a prophecy sure. This is proof that the Quran itself, containing numerous prophecies, was written from the first, otherwise a challenge to the opponents in these early revelations to write down the knowledge of the future which they had through their diviners would be meaningless.

b **(48)** The Prophet Jonah is here called the Companion of the fish because of the incident mentioned in 37:142.

c **(51)** The chapter ends with the same allegation by the disbelievers as the one with which it opened. The last verse, *and it is nothing but a Reminder for the nations*, sums up the arguments against that allegation. Note that even as early as this revelation, the Prophet's message is declared to be meant for all nations.

Chapter 69

Al-Ḥāqqah The Sure Truth

The name of this chapter is the word which constitutes its first verse. *Al-Ḥāqqah* or *The Sure Truth* is the hour of the triumph of truth and the doom of the opponents. After mentioning this, the chapter refers to the fate of the earlier nations and says that the Sure Truth is the time of the reward of the faithful and punishment of the evil-doers. At the end the chapter deals with the allegations of the opponents against the Holy Prophet. This chapter is later in revelation than the last chapter as it deals with later allegations that he was a poet or a diviner or an impostor.

Section 1: **The Doom**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 The sure Truth! **2**What is the sure Truth? **3**And what would make *y*ou realize what the sure Truth is?[a] **4**Thamūd and Ād called the calamity a lie. **5**Then as for Thamūd, they were destroyed by the severe punishment.[b] **6**And as for Ād, they were destroyed by a roaring, violent wind, **7**which He made to prevail against them for seven nights and eight days continuously, so that *y*ou could have seen the people in it prostrate as if they were trunks of hollow palm-trees. **8**So can *y*ou see a remnant of them?

9 And Pharaoh and those before him and the overthrown cities committed evil.[c] **10**And they disobeyed the messenger of their Lord, so He punished them with a vehement punishment. **11**Surely We carried you in the ship, when the water rose high, **12**that We might make it a reminder for you, and that the retaining ear might retain it.[d]

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a **(3)** The instances given about Ād and Thamūd and Pharaoh and the Sodomites, in verses 4–10, show that the real significance of *al-ḥāqqah,* "the sure Truth", is *the hour in which the truth will be triumphant*. There is no doubt that a fuller manifestation of the Truth, and of the requital of those who reject it, will take place in the Hereafter, and thus it also means the Resurrection.

b **(5)** See 7:78. The severe punishment was an earthquake.

c **(9)** The *overthrown cities* are the cities of Lot; see 11:82.

d **(12)** The reference in verses 11–12 is to Noah.

13 So when the trumpet is blown with a single blast, **14**and the earth and the mountains are borne away and crushed with one crash — **15**on that day will the Event come to pass,[a] **16**and the heaven will be split apart; so that day it will be frail, **17**and the angels will be on its sides. And above them eight will bear that day *y*our Lord's Throne of Power.[b] **18**On that day you will be exposed to view — no secret of yours will remain hidden.[c] **19**Then as for him who is given his book in his right hand, he will say: Here, read my book. **20**Surely I knew that I should meet my account. **21**So he will be in a life of bliss, **22**in a lofty Garden, **23**its fruits are near.[d] **24**Eat and drink pleasantly for what you sent on ahead in bygone days.

25 And as for him who is given his book in his left hand — he will say: If only my book had not been given to me! **26**And I had not known what my account was! **27**If only (death) had made an end (of me)! **28**My wealth has not availed me. **29**My authority has

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***a* (15)** The consequences of this Event are described in 56:3; see 56:1 footnote, where it is shown that the Event, *al-Wāqi'ah*, signifies the doom of the opponents in this life, with a full manifestation in the life after death. The passing away of the earth and the mountains and their being crushed signifies the fall of the small and great men in connection with that doom.

***b* (17)** The eight bearers of the Throne of Power (or *'arsh*) either represent something above the angels, or particular angels above the ordinary angels. However, it should be borne in mind that God Himself is *al-Qayyūm*, or the *Self-Subsisting by Whom all things subsist* (2:255), and other things are *not* a support for the Divine Being. There is a saying of the Holy Prophet, reported by all commentators, that at present such bearers are four. Now there are four attributes of the Divine Being specially connected with the maintenance of the world, and these are mentioned in the opening chapter of the Quran in the Divine names: *Rabb, Raḥmān, Raḥīm*, and *Mālik*. These represent *providence, beneficence, mercy* and *requital*, which bring the creation to perfection and from which all other attributes may be inferred. Hence these are the four *bearers of the Throne of Power*, so far as this world is concerned. Why are they eight on the day of Resurrection? The other world is a complete, but at the same time a new, manifestation of the spiritual realities of this life. Hence, there is a new manifestation of the four attributes of the Divine Being by which the world subsists, and thus these four attributes become eight on the day of Resurrection. Note that, as Divine attributes are brought into action through the agency of angels, the four or eight attributes would also be manifested through angels, and in this sense we may look upon the bearers of the Throne of Power as being four or eight angels.

***c* (18)** This verse speaks clearly of the manifestation of the hidden realities on the day of Resurrection.

***d* (23)** These fruits are the manifestation of the fruits of righteous deeds. They are here spoken of as being near so that they are available in this life too.

gone from me. [30]Seize him, then fetter him, [31]then cast him into the burning Fire, [32]then insert him in a chain seventy lengths long.[a] [33]Surely he did not believe in Allah, the Great, [34]nor did he urge the feeding of the poor. [35]Therefore he does not have here this day a true friend, [36]nor any food except filth, [37]which none but the wrongdoers eat.

Section 2: **False allegations refuted**

38 But no! I swear by what you see, [39]and what you do not see! [40]Surely, it is the word of an honoured Messenger, [41]and it is not the word of a poet. Little do you believe! [42]Nor the word of a soothsayer. Little are you mindful!

43 It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. [44]And if he had fabricated against Us certain sayings, [45]We would certainly have seized him by the right hand, [46]then cut off his heart's vein. [47]And not one of you could have withheld Us from him.[b]

***a* (32)** In these verses the spiritual torture of this world is represented as a physical punishment in the next. The chain represents the desires and entanglements of this world, and it is these desires that will assume the shape of a chain. The heart-burnings of this world will likewise be clearly seen as flames of burning fire. The wicked one has in this very world within himself a hell of the passions and inextinguishable desires of this world, and feels the burning of that hell in the failures he encounters. When, therefore, he is cast farther off from his temporal desires and sees an everlasting despair before him, his heart-burnings and bitter sighs for his dear desires assume the shape of burning Fire.

The casting into a chain seventy lengths long is significant. Man's limit of age may as a general rule be fixed at seventy, and he may sometimes even enjoy seventy years excluding the periods of childhood and decrepitude. These seventy years during which he could work with honesty, wisdom and zeal are wasted away by the wicked one only in the entanglements of the world, and in following sensual passions. He does not try to free himself from the chain of desires, and therefore in the next world the desires which he indulged in for seventy years will be embodied into a chain seventy lengths long, every length representing, as it were, a year. (*Editor's Note:* The word *dhirā',* used here meaning one length, indicates a distance equal to about the length of the lower arm of a man.)

***b* (47)** Verses 44–47 show that one who fabricates Divine revelation does not prosper. Compare Deut. 18:20, where the prophecy of the advent of a Prophet like Moses is followed by the words: "But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die." Jesus' words in Matthew 7:19: "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire", after comparing a false prophet with a corrupt tree that does not bring forth good fruit, point to a like effect.

48 And surely it is a Reminder for the dutiful. **49**And We certainly know that some of you are rejectors. **50**And it is indeed a (source of) grief to the disbelievers.[a] **51**And surely it is the certain Truth.[b] **52**So glorify the name of *y*our Lord, the incomparably Great.

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a **(50)** Because the punishment of which it warns them must overtake them.

b **(51)** The *ḥaqq al-yaqīn, true certainty* or *certain truth* of this verse, is the same as *al-ḥāqqah* of the opening verse. The ultimate triumph of Truth is a certain truth.

Chapter 70

Al-Ma'ārij The Ways of Ascent

The title of this chapter is taken from v. 3, where Allah is called the "Lord of *the ways of Ascent.*" While holding out the certainty of the punishment, this chapter points out at first that great ends are achieved in a long period of time. Then we are told that the means of ascent are those by which the faithful attain nearness to God. At the end it prophesies that a new nation will be raised in place of the opponents who will meet with disgrace. This chapter was revealed not later than the close of the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **The certainty of the punishment**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 A questioner asks about the punishment to befall **2**the disbelievers — there is none to avert it [a] — **3**from Allah, Lord of the ways of Ascent.[b] **4**To Him ascend the angels and the Spirit in a day the length of which is fifty thousand years.[c] **5**So be patient with a goodly patience.

6 Surely they see it far off, **7**and We see it near. **8**The day when the heaven is as molten brass, **9**and the mountains are as wool; **10**and no friend will ask of friend, **11**(though) they are made

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a **(2)** No particular questioner is meant. The last chapter speaks in terms of the highest certainty of the final triumph of truth and of the doom of the opponents, and the question, *When will it be*? was natural. It is repeated very often: "When will this promise come to pass, if you are truthful?" (36:48, 67:25, etc.).

b **(3)** This indicates that God grants to the faithful the means of Ascent, or of exaltation. Compare 56:3, where the Event is spoken of as *degrading, exalting*. The means of exaltation of the believers are pointed out in verses 22–35.

c **(4)** *Al-Rūḥ* or the *Spirit* very often stands for Divine revelation or Gabriel, who brings the revelation to the Prophet. But here it seems to be a collective name for the spirits of the faithful, because it is through Divine revelation that a new spirit is awakened in the faithful; see 78:38. The angels are mentioned along with the faithful because it is through an angel that spiritual life is breathed into man, and he starts life as a spiritual wayfarer. A day of the spiritual advancement of man is spoken of as being equal to fifty thousand years to show the immense vastness of that advancement. Or, the day of fifty thousand years may be the day of the final triumph of Truth in the world, from the time when revelation was first granted to man.

to see them. The guilty one will wish he could redeem himself from the punishment of that day by his children, [12]and his wife and his brother, [13]and his kin that gave him shelter, [14]and all that are in the earth — (wishing) then (that) this might deliver him — [15]by no means! Surely it is a flaming Fire, [16]plucking out the extremities — [17]it shall claim him who retreats and turns his back, [18]and hoards (wealth) then withholds (it).

19 Surely man is created impatient — [20]fretful when evil afflicts him [21]and miserly when good befalls him — [22]except those who pray, [23]who are constant at their prayer, [24]and in whose wealth there is a known right [25]for the beggar and the destitute, [26]and those who accept the truth of the day of Judgment, [27]and those who are fearful of the punishment of their Lord — [28]surely the punishment of their Lord is not to be felt secure from — [29]and those who restrain their sexual passions, [30]except in the presence of their spouses or those whom their right hands possess, for such surely are not to be blamed,[a] [31]but whoever seeks to go beyond that, these are the transgressors. [32]And those who are faithful to their trusts and their covenant, [33]and those who are upright in their testimonies, [34]and those who keep a guard on their prayer. [35]These are in Gardens, honoured.

Section 2: **A new nation to be raised up**

36 But what is the matter with those who disbelieve, that they hasten on to *y*ou,[b] [37]on the right hand and on the left, in assorted groups? [38]Does every man of them desire to be admitted to the Garden of bliss? [39]By no means! Surely We have created them for what they know.[c]

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a **(30)** See 23:5–6 and footnotes.

b **(36)** Nearly the same words — *hastening to the Inviter* — occur in 54:8. Here and in the verses that follow is a description of the time when these very opponents would be hastening on to the Prophet, accepting the truth. V. 38 makes it further clear: *Does every man of them desire to be admitted to the Garden of bliss?*

c **(39)** What is negatived here is the fact that the evildoers can enter the Garden of bliss. "For what" signifies the end for which man has been created. It is to rise above sin, to be able to ascend to God, the Lord of the ways of Ascent; see v. 3. The Garden of bliss stands clearly for the Ascension of man to God which is the real object of his life.

40 But indeed! I swear by the Lord of the Eastern lands and the Western lands! — that We are certainly Powerful **41**to bring in their place (others) better than them, and We shall not be overcome.[a] **42**So leave them alone to plunge in idle talk and to sport, until they come face to face with that day of theirs which they are promised — **43**the day when they come forth from the graves in haste, as if racing to a goal, **44**their eyes cast down, disgrace covering them. Such is the day which they are promised.[b]

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a **(41)** Note the clear prophecy that an evil generation will be brought to naught and another people, the righteous, shall inherit the land. The old order will be changed and a new order established instead of that.

b **(44)** Verses 43–44 give us a clear statement as to the final triumph of Truth and the overthrow of opposition or the triumph of righteousness over the powers of evil. Being spiritually dead, their very homes were graves in a metaphorical sense. As in almost all chapters of this period, the final triumph of Truth runs along as an undercurrent in the mention of the Resurrection.

Chapter 71

Nūḥ Noah

This chapter deals entirely with Noah, providing an example of the certainty of the threatened punishment of evil. It was revealed in the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Noah preaches**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Surely We sent Noah to his people, saying: Warn *y*our people before a painful punishment comes to them. **2**He said: My people, surely I am a plain warner to you, **3**that you should serve Allah and keep your duty to Him and obey me — **4**He will forgive you some of your sins and grant you respite to an appointed term. Surely the term of Allah, when it comes, is not postponed. If only you knew!

5 He said: My Lord, I have called my people night and day, **6**but my call has only made them flee the more.[a] **7**And whenever I call to them that You may forgive them, they thrust their fingers in their ears and cover themselves with their garments,[b] and persist (in denial) and are big with pride. **8**Then surely I have called to them aloud, **9**then spoken to them in public and spoken to them in private, **10**so I have said: Ask forgiveness of your Lord; surely He is ever Forgiving, **11**He will send down upon you rain, pouring

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a **(6)** The meaning is: *the more I call them, the more they flee*. The call is not the immediate and effective cause of their flight, which is really due to the stubbornness of their hearts. This is made clear in what follows. Exactly in the same sense a chapter of the Quran is spoken of as "adding uncleanness" to the uncleanness of those in whose hearts is a disease (9:125); and on another occasion, exactly in the same sense, Allah is spoken of as *increasing* the disease of those in whose hearts is a disease (2:10).

b **(7)** Covering themselves with garments is explained as covering their ears with their garments, denoting their holding back from giving ear, or as running away. Some take garments (*thiyāb*) as meaning *the heart*, as in 74:4, the meaning being that *they cover their hearts*, refusing to ponder over what is said.

in abundance, [12]and help you with wealth and sons, and make for you gardens, and make for you rivers.[a]

[13] What is the matter with you that you do not hope for greatness from Allah?[b] [14]And indeed He has created you by various stages.[c] [15]Do you not see how Allah has created the seven heavens alike, [16]and made the moon in them (as) a light, and made the sun a lamp? [17]And Allah has caused you to grow out of the earth as a growth,[d] [18]then He returns you to it, then will He bring you forth a (new) bringing forth.[e] [19]And Allah has made the earth a wide expanse for you, [20]that you may go along in it in spacious paths.[f]

Section 2: **Destruction of transgressors**

[21] Noah said: My Lord, surely they disobey me and follow him whose wealth and children have increased him in nothing but loss. [22]And they have planned a mighty plan. [23]And they say: Do not abandon your gods; nor abandon *Wadd,* nor *Suwā',* nor *Yaghūth*

***a* (12)** They are promised various blessings, if they turn to Allah, which really means that their doom shall be averted, for nations are no doubt destroyed when they indulge in evil inordinately, and they prosper so long as their good qualities preponderate.

***b* (13)** This is the Prophet's address to an evil generation. They are told that they can rise to greatness by giving up their evil ways.

***c* (14)** The words undoubtedly speak of the evolution of man. It is clear from v. 17, where the first stage is spoken of as a growth from the earth, that the words here imply that man has been brought to the present state after passing through various conditions.

***d* (17)** Here man is described as having grown out of the earth as a growth, i.e., by a process of development. Thus verses 14 and 17 refer to that great process of development through which man has attained to the present stage of physical perfection.

***e* (18)** The new bringing forth is in reference to the Resurrection. It is called a new growth to show that it is not the same as man's life on this earth but a new life, the life Spiritual. This growth begins in this life, but a complete manifestation of it takes place in the Resurrection.

***f* (20)** The spacious paths made for man's earthly existence are an indication of the spiritual paths wherein a God-fearing man attains to spiritual perfection. But the mention of spacious paths is also to show that the making of spacious roads is necessary for human civilization.

and *Ya'ūq* and *Nasr*.[a] **24**And indeed they have led many astray. And (my Lord) increase the wrongdoers in nothing but ruin.[b] **25**Because of their wrongs they were drowned, then made to enter Fire, so they found no helpers besides Allah. **26**And Noah said: My Lord, do not leave any of the disbelievers dwelling in the land.[c] **27**For if You leave them, they will lead astray Your servants, and will not produce any offspring but immoral, ungrateful ones. **28**My Lord, forgive me and my parents and him who enters my house believing, and the believing men and the believing women. And increase the wrongdoers in nothing but destruction!

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a **(23)** The names of the idols given here are those which existed in Arabia in the Prophet's time. The Quran, while relating the histories of previous prophets, often introduces the Prophet's own history, as is the case here. Even if these verses are taken as referring to Noah, no difficulty arises because there is reason to believe that the Arabs obtained most of their idols from foreign countries. The commentators say that *Wadd* was worshipped in the form of a man, *Suwā'* in that of a woman, *Yaghūth* in that of a lion, *Ya'ūq* in that of a horse and *Nasr* in that of an eagle.

b **(24)** They only went on adding wrongs to their wrongs; hence the prayer of the messenger to increase them in nothing but ruin. In fact, they were bringing ruin on their heads with their own hands.

c **(26)** Noah was speaking only of his own people and praying against them only. All his statements and prayers refer to them, and not to the whole world. Hence *al-arḍ* simply signifies *the land* in which they lived and does not refer to the whole earth.

Chapter 72

Al-Jinn The Jinn

The title of this chapter is taken from the mention of certain believers in the Holy Prophet's truth called *jinn.* This is a prophetical reference to those people accepting Islam who were yet hidden from the eye, belonging to lands beyond Arabia as well as to future times. The chapter was revealed two years before the *Hijra* when opposition to the Holy Prophet had reached a climax and persecution of Muslims was at its most severe. In such circumstances of seeming hopelessness, a very emphatic assurance of eventual success is given in this chapter. The second half of the chapter speaks of the protection granted to prophets against their enemies.

Section 1: **Foreign believers**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Say: It has been revealed to me that a group of the jinn listened,[a] so they said: Surely we have heard a wonderful Quran, **2**guiding to the right way — so we believe in it. And we shall not set up anyone as partner with our Lord; **3**and He — exalted be the majesty of our Lord! — has not taken a consort, nor a son;[b] **4**and the foolish among us used to forge extravagant lies against Allah; **5**and we thought that the people and the jinn did not utter a lie against Allah; **6**and men from among the people used to seek

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a **(1)** The existence of *jinn*, or ethereal beings like the angels (the former being the spirits of evil and the latter the spirits of good), is a question quite distinct, but it is clear that the jinn spoken of here did not belong to this class; see 6:128 footnote 1, for full explanation of the word. Jinn are also referred to in 46:29–31, where they are made to say: "Our people, we have heard a Book revealed after Moses, verifying what is before it". This shows that they were Jews. The jinn spoken of here are evidently Christians, as v. 3 shows.

b **(3)** The words of this verse are a clear indication that the persons spoken of here are Christians. That both Jews and Christians living outside Arabia accepted the message of Truth brought by the Prophet is a fact. But from what is stated further on, it appears that the reference here is to Christian nations of the distant future who will accept the truth of the message brought by the Prophet. At any rate the prophetical in these words, whether relating to the near or distant future, is clearly hinted at in the opening words of the chapter — *It has been revealed to me that a group of the jinn listened*.

refuge with men from among the jinn, so they increased them in evil doing;[a] **7**and they thought, as you think, that Allah would not raise anyone; **8**and we sought to reach heaven, but we found it filled with strong guards and flames;[b] **9**and we used to sit in some of its sitting-places to steal a hearing. But he who tries to listen now finds a flame lying in wait for him; **10**and we do not know whether evil is meant for those on earth or whether their Lord means to direct them aright;[c] **11**and some of us are good and others of us are below that — we are sects following different ways; **12**and we know that we cannot escape Allah in the earth, nor can we escape Him by flight; **13**and when we heard the guidance, we believed in it. So whoever believes in his Lord, he fears neither loss nor injustice; **14**and some of us are those who submit, and others of us are deviators. So whoever submits, these aim at the right way.

15 And as to the deviators, they are fuel of hell; **16**and if they keep to the (right) way, We would certainly give them to drink abundant water,[d] **17**so that We may try them by (means of) it. And whoever turns away from the reminder of his Lord, He will make him enter into an afflicting punishment; **18**and the mosques are Allah's, so do not call upon anyone with Allah; **19**and when the Servant of Allah stood up praying to Him, they nearly crowded him (to death).[e]

Section 2: **Protection of Revelation**

20 Say: I only call upon my Lord, and I do not set up any partner with Him. **21**Say: I do not control evil nor good for you. **22**Say: None can protect me against Allah, nor can I find any refuge besides Him; **23**(my duty is) but to deliver (the command)

***a* (6)** The jinn and the people (Arabic: *ins*) of this verse are undoubtedly the leaders of evil and the weaker ones in intellect who followed them blindly.

***b* (8)** By *reaching heaven* is meant *learning secrets of the heaven*. The reference may be to the diviners and astrologers among them, for which see 37:7–10, but more likely it is a prophetical reference to the great scientific discoveries of the modern age relating to heaven.

***c* (10)** These words seem to refer to the great tribulations which are meant to direct man's attention to spiritual truth.

***d* (16)** Abundance of *wealth* may be meant by abundance of water.

***e* (19)** The servant of Allah is the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

of Allah and His messages. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, surely for him is the Fire of hell, to abide in it for a long time, **24**till when they see what they are promised, they will know who is weaker in helpers and smaller in numbers.[a]

25 Say: I do not know whether what you are promised is near or if my Lord will appoint for it a distant term. **26**The Knower of the unseen, so He makes His secrets known to none, **27**except a messenger whom He chooses.[b] For surely He makes a guard to go before him and behind him, **28**that He may know that they have truly delivered the messages of their Lord; and He encompasses whatever is with them, and He keeps account of all things.[c]

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a **(24)** As a human being left to himself without a friend, without helper, rejected at home and elsewhere (as he was rejected at Ta'if at this time), the Holy Prophet had thus poured out his heart, in this state of utter helplessness: "O Lord, I make my complaint to You of my helplessness and frailty and of my insignificance before mankind." Now contrast with it the revelation which he received just then, which speaks of the opponents of Truth who would soon be brought low — "they will know who is weaker in helpers and smaller in numbers." The source of the Holy Prophet's revelation was other than his own heart, for the same heart could not simultaneously vent feelings of utter helplessness and weakness and those of unbounded confidence in his ultimate triumph.

b **(27)** That the overthrow of opposition to the great message of Truth was certain is stated in v. 24. Then v. 25 states that the Prophet did not know whether this overthrow would come soon or in the distant future, but Truth must triumph. And the law is stated now that God makes known His will, *the unseen*, the Truth, by His messenger, to convey that Truth to other people. It is God's message and it must be delivered in spite of all opposition. The Divine purpose is accomplished by sending a guard, before and after the messenger, to protect him against all onslaughts, as is made clear in the words that follow.

c **(28)** Note the firm tone of these revelations under the disheartening circumstances to which attention has been drawn in v. 24 footnote. Such words could not proceed from any but a Divine source — *the message must be delivered, Allah encompasses all, nothing is out of His reach*.

Chapter 73

Al-Muzzammil

The One Covering Himself Up

This chapter receives its title from the Holy Prophet's description in the first verse as one who had *covered himself up,* which signifies *one who has prepared himself for prayer.* The previous chapter promises protection to the Holy Prophet and here he is told to seek that protection through prayer. The chapter begins by telling the Holy Prophet to pass the night in prayer, and it ends with a general command to all believers always to be mindful of prayer. In between, the Holy Prophet is told to bear patiently the ill-treatment by his enemies, who would soon receive their punishment as did Pharaoh when he wanted to destroy Moses. The revelation of this chapter belongs to the early period at Makkah. The reference to fighting in v. 20 does not make that verse a later revelation, as that reference is prophetical.

Section 1: **The Prophet enjoined to pray**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O *y*ou covering *y*ourself up![a] **2**Rise to pray by night except a little, **3**half of it, or lessen it a little, **4**or add to it, and recite the Quran (distinctly) at a leisurely pace. **5**Surely We shall charge *y*ou with a weighty word.[b] **6**The rising (to pray) by night is surely the firmest way to tread and most effective in speech.[c] **7**Truly *y*ou have by day prolonged occupation.

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a **(1)** The ordinary explanation is that, on receiving the Call, his first revelation, the Holy Prophet came back home trembling and said to his wife: *Cover me, cover me*. But various other explanations are given and some take it as an allusion to his preparation for prayers. The Prophet's own words, as recorded in Bukhari (1: hadith 3), make it clear that the reference here is to his covering himself up on receiving the first revelation. He is in fact told that he should not fear or tremble on account of the tremendous responsibility placed on him of reforming humanity, but should seek the help of God, through prayer to Him, the most effective prayer being prayer in the night, when the world is asleep.

b **(5)** Being burdened with the guidance of the whole world was indeed a weighty word, the weightiest word with which any human being has been charged in the whole history of humanity.

c **(6)** The praying at night is here described as being, firstly, *the firmest way to tread* — to tread the way of *life*, to tread upon all evil inclinations — and,

8 And remember the name of *y*our Lord and devote *y*ourself to Him with (complete) devotion. **9**The Lord of the East and the West — there is no god but He — so take Him for Protector. **10**And bear patiently what they say and turn away from them with a dignified withdrawal. **11**And leave Me and the deniers, possessors of plenty, and give them respite for a little while. **12**Surely with Us are heavy fetters and a flaming Fire, **13**and food that chokes and a painful punishment. **14**On the day when the earth and the mountains quake and the mountains become (as) heaps of sand let loose.[a]

15 Surely We have sent to you a Messenger, a witness against you, as We sent a messenger to Pharaoh.[b] **16**But Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger, so We seized him with a violent grip. **17**How, then, if you disbelieve, will you guard yourselves on the day which will make children grey-headed, **18**the heaven being torn apart thereby? His promise is ever fulfilled.[c] **19**Surely this is a Reminder; so whoever wishes may take a way to his Lord.

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secondly, *the most effective in speech* — what one says to other people becomes most effective. The speaker, the inviter to Truth, has his heart strengthened with force Divine through his lengthened devotions in the still of the night, and his word therefore carries the Divine force with it and enters the hearts of those who listen to him. Thus was the Prophet fortified doubly, in his deeds as well as in his words, to carry his message to other people, and thus should his true followers try to get strength from the same Divine source in the dead of night. The Divine light in its full brilliance then illumines the heart of man which reflects that light and illumines the world.

a **(14)** Verses 12–14 speak of the wretched condition in which the present possessors of ease and plenty would find themselves, and how the great obstacles to the spread of truth would be removed before the advance of Truth; see 20:105.

b **(15)** The Holy Prophet's likeness to Moses is stated in the clearest terms in this, one of the earliest revelations, and thus the Holy Prophet's claim to be the promised prophet of Deuteronomy 18:18, who is expressly stated to be the "*like*" of Moses, is as old as his revelation.

c **(18)** The description in verses 17–18 is applicable to both the day of Resurrection and the doom of the opponents in this life. Such phrases as *the rolling up of heaven* (21:104), *the heaven being torn apart* (as here and in 82:1), *the removing of the covering of heaven* (81:11), and other similar phrases, all really speak of *the sweeping away of the old order of things to give place to a new*, attended by the necessary terrors and disasters, and hence the description applies to the doom of a nation in this world as well as to the entirely new order of things which will be ushered in with the Resurrection.

Section 2: **Prayer enjoined on Muslims**

20 *Y*our Lord knows indeed that *y*ou pass in prayer nearly two-thirds of the night, and (sometimes) half of it, and (sometimes) a third of it, as do a group of those with *y*ou. And Allah measures the night and the day. He knows that (all of) you are not able to do it, so He has turned to you (mercifully); so read of the Quran whatever is easy for you.[a] He knows that there are sick among you, and others who travel in the land seeking of Allah's bounty, and others who fight in Allah's way.[b] So read as much of it as is easy (for you), and keep up prayer and give the due charity and offer to Allah a goodly gift. And whatever of good you send on beforehand for yourselves, you will find it with Allah — that is best and greatest in reward. And ask forgiveness of Allah. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

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a **(20-1)** The Holy Prophet and those with him passed sometimes two-thirds, sometimes a half, and sometimes a third of the night in prayer. All Muslims could not follow their example, and hence they are told that they might pray by night so long as it was easy to them and not a burden. By the reading of the Quran is here meant its recital in the night-prayer called *Tahajjud*.

b **(20-2)** The mention here of fighting is very probably a prophetical statement, as we find in many other places in the Quran; hence the occurrence of the word is no argument that the verse was not revealed at Makkah.

Chapter 74

Al-Muddaththir

The One Wrapping Himself Up

This chapter is the second in the order of revelation. A period of about six months had elapsed since the first revelation (96:1–5), and this interruption in revelation weighed heavily on the Holy Prophet. When the angel of the Lord appeared to him again, the Holy Prophet sought to *wrap himself up* in clothes, hence the title of this chapter. He is told not to seek seclusion but to arise and warn a people sunk low in evil.

Section 1: **The Prophet enjoined to warn**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O *y*ou who wrap *y*ourself up![a] **2**Arise and warn,[b] **3**and *y*our Lord do magnify, **4**and *y*our garments do purify,[c] **5**and uncleanness do shun, **6**and do no favour seeking gain,[d] **7**and for the sake of *y*our Lord, be patient.

8 For when the trumpet is sounded, **9**that will be — that day — a difficult day, **10**for the disbelievers, anything but easy. **11**Leave Me alone with him whom I created, **12**and gave him vast riches, **13**and sons dwelling in his presence, **14**and made matters easy for him, **15**and yet he desires that I should give more! **16**By no means! Surely he is hostile to Our messages. **17**I will make a distressing punishment overtake him. **18**Surely he reflected and determined, **19**but may he be destroyed how he determined! **20**Again, may he be destroyed

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a **(1)** Some take the word *muddaththir* metaphorically, the meaning being *one clad in the garments of prophethood.*

b **(2)** In the last chapter, the Prophet is commanded to engage himself in devotion so that he should attain to perfection; here he is commanded to convey the message and to warn, to make others perfect.

c **(4)** Purification of the garments does not relate only to the outward act of purification, but also to the purification of the heart, as is shown in the next verse, which contains a command to shun every kind of uncleanness.

d **(6)** The reference is in particular to the great favour which the Holy Prophet did to others by warning them and guiding them to the right way. But the words are general; even when conferring a worldly benefit on another, there should be no intention to receive any return for it.

how he determined! [21]Then he looked, [22]then frowned and scowled, [23]then turned back and was big with pride, [24]then said: This is nothing but magic from of old, [25]this is nothing but the word of a mortal!

26 I will cast him into hell. [27]And what will make *y*ou realize what hell is? [28]It leaves nothing, and spares nothing. [29]It scorches the mortal. [30]Over it are nineteen.[a] [31]And We have made none but angels (to be) wardens of the Fire, and We have made their number only as a trial for those who disbelieve, that those who have been given the Book may be certain and those who believe may increase in faith, and those who have been given the Book and the believers may not doubt; and that those in whose hearts is a disease and the disbelievers may say: What does Allah mean by this parable? Thus Allah leaves in error whom He pleases, and guides whom He pleases. And none knows the forces of *y*our Lord but He. And this is nothing but a Reminder to mortals.

Section 2: **The warning**

32 Indeed, by the moon! [33]And the night when it departs! [34]And the dawn when it shines! [35]Surely it is one of the gravest (misfortunes), [36]a warning to mortals, [37]to him among you who will go forward or will remain behind.[b] [38]Every soul is held in pledge for what it earns, [39]except the people of the right hand. [40]In Gardens, they ask one another [41]about the guilty: [42]What has brought you into hell? [43]They will say: We were not from among those who prayed, [44]nor did we feed the poor,[c] [45]and we indulged in idle

***a* (30)** This is called a *parable* in the next verse: *What does Allah mean by this parable*? All that the Quran says is that *over it are nineteen*. The commentators think that nineteen angels, or nineteen classes, or nineteen ranks may be meant. The particular number is considered to be due to the misuse of nineteen faculties which are enumerated by the commentators.

***b* (37)** The light of Truth would shine forth, we are told in these verses (32–40), but not without a grave misfortune to those who refuse to go forward, and this is a warning. Those who go forward, on the other hand, will not be affected by that, the gravest of misfortunes, for the people of the right hand will be in Gardens, every soul being pledged for what it earns. The prophetical strain adopted here regarding the doom of the opponents is continued to the end of the chapter.

***c* (44)** Note the reply to v. 42 — *What has brought you into hell*? It is neglect of two chief duties: *we did not pray* and *we did not feed the poor*. These are thus the two pillars of faith: service of God and service of humanity.

talk with idle talkers, [46]and we called the day of Judgment a lie, [47]till the inevitable caught up with us. [48]So the intercession of intercessors will not avail them.

49 What is then the matter with them, that they turn away from the Reminder, [50]as if they were frightened donkeys, [51]fleeing from a lion? [52]No, everyone of them desires that he should be given pages spread out[a] — [53]by no means! But they do not fear the Hereafter. [54]Indeed, it is surely a Reminder. [55]So whoever wishes may be mindful of it. [56]And they will not be mindful unless Allah please.[b] He is Worthy that duty should be kept to Him and Worthy to forgive.[c]

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a **(52)** Everyone of them would have a revelation granted to him direct from heaven. This they said repeatedly: Why does not Allah speak to us? (2:118).

b **(56-1)** In the Quran God does not compel people to adopt one way or another. He points out the right course from the wrong and leaves it to the choice of the individual: *So whoever wishes may be mindful of it* (v. 55); *We have truly shown him the way*; *he may be thankful or unthankful* (76:3). Similar verses abound in the Quran. The statement, *and they will not be mindful unless Allah please*, means that Allah is pleased to guide those in the right way and to make those mindful who open their hearts to receive it. Note how clearly the verses preceding it depict the condition of those who do not even listen to the Reminder: *What is then the matter with them, that they turn away from the Reminder, as if they were frightened donkeys, fleeing from a lion*? (verses 49–51). See also 76:30.

c **(56-2)** God is Worthy that duty of Him should be observed and therefore whoever fails to observe that duty must suffer. But God is not a hard taskmaster; if man fails to observe his duty, God in His unbounded love comes to his help and covers his faults with His vast forgiveness. The epithet here used — *Worthy to forgive* — indicates that forgiveness is in His nature; even if man does not ask for forgiveness, He forgives.

Chapter 75

Al-Qiyāmah The Resurrection

This chapter is entitled *The Resurrection* from the occurrence of that word in its first verse, which puts forward the spiritual resurrection as evidence of the great Resurrection. The *self-accusing spirit* of v. 2 is the first stage in man's spiritual resurrection, the stage at which the inner self of man asserts itself when he does evil. At this stage the human in man becomes stronger than the animal. This chapter, dealing with the subject of the resurrection, is a very early revelation.

Section 1: **The Truth of the Resurrection**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 No, I swear by the day of Resurrection![a] **2**No, I swear by the self-accusing spirit![b] **3**Does man think that We shall not gather his bones?[c] **4**Indeed, We are Powerful to make complete his whole make.[d] **5**But man desires to go on doing evil in front of him. **6**He asks: When is the day of Resurrection? **7**So when the sight is confused,[e] **8**and the moon becomes dark, **9**and the sun and the moon are brought together[f] — **10**man will say on that day: Where to flee? **11**No! There is no refuge! **12**With *y*our Lord on that day is the place of rest. **13**Man will that day be informed of what he sent

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a **(1)** By the resurrection is here meant the spiritual resurrection of the Arabs, to be brought about through the Prophet. The primary significance of *qiyāmah* is only *rising, the rising of a man all at once*. *Al-qiyāmah* is now a term which is synonymous with the great Resurrection, but it has not lost its original significance, and means also the rising to life of those who are spiritually dead. The *lā* ("no") in the beginning of v. 1 and v. 2 is used to give emphasis to the oath.

b **(2)** For the "self-accusing spirit" see the introductory note above.

c **(3)** The *gathering of the bones* stands for a new life.

d **(4)** God, Who made a complete man out of nothing, we are here told, has also the power to give life to bones or to raise him a second time.

e **(7)** Some great calamity is implied which would perplex the opponents. Some commentators take these to be the signs of the approach of the death of a person.

f **(9)** This implies the disappearance of the light of both.

on ahead and what he put off.[a] 14Indeed, man is evidence against himself, 15though he put up excuses.

16 (O Prophet!) Do not move *y*our tongue therewith to make haste with it.[b] 17Surely on Us rests the collecting of it and the reciting of it.[c] 18So when We recite it, follow its recitation. 19Again on Us rests the explaining of it.

20 No, but you love the present life, 21and neglect the Hereafter. 22(Some) faces that day will be bright, 23looking to their Lord.[d] 24And (other) faces that day will be gloomy, 25knowing that a great disaster will be made to befall them.[e] 26Indeed, when (the soul) comes up to the throat, 27and it is said: Who will ascend (with it)?[f] 28And he is sure that it is the parting, 29and affliction is combined with affliction — 30to *y*our Lord on that day is the driving.

***a* (13)** *What he sent on ahead* implies the evil deeds which he did but ought not to have done; *what he put off* being the good deeds which he failed to do but which he ought to have done.

***b* (16)** The preceding verses speak of the distress which must befall those who do not forsake the wrong course. The Prophet naturally desired to make it clear to them, and therefore, he was anxious that the warning should be given immediately in plainer words. So, he is told not to make haste with it. Hence the statement made in the verses that follow, namely, that the recitation and collection of the whole of the Quran, together with its effective explanation to the opponents, were matters which Allah had decided to bring about, and the Prophet should have no anxiety on that account. Compare 20:113–114.

***c* (17)** There can be no clearer evidence that the collection of the verses into chapters and of the chapters into one whole is here claimed by the Quran to be a matter which, like its revelation, was to be entirely carried out under Divine guidance by the Holy Prophet himself. The Holy Book was thus from the first intended to be arranged and collected into one whole. Note that if the order of revelation were to be followed in the arrangement of its parts, its collection would not have been spoken of as something distinct from its *revelation*, which is implied in the word *recitation*.

***d* (23)** As *that day* represents both the day of the breathing of the life spiritual here and the day of the Resurrection, the words *looking to their Lord* have also a double significance, indicating looking to the Lord for their reward in the former case, and, the highest bliss of all, the sight of the Lord in the Hereafter. It should be noted that the sight of the Lord does not imply that the Lord will have a body; it is not with the material eye that the Lord will be seen, but by the spiritual eye, which the righteous will possess on the day of Resurrection.

***e* (25)** Note that this great disaster also befell them in this life, and thus it demonstrated the truth of the Hereafter.

***f* (27)** Will the angels of mercy ascend with it or the angels of punishment?

Section 2: **The dead rise**

31 So he did not accept the truth, nor did he pray, **32**but denied and turned back, **33**then he went to his people arrogantly.[a] **34**Nearer to *y*ou and nearer; **35**again, nearer to *y*ou and nearer (is woe).[b] **36**Does man think that he will be left aimless?[c] **37**Was he not a small life-germ in sperm emitted? **38**Then he was a clot; so He created (him), then made (him) perfect. **39**Then He made of him two kinds, the male and the female. **40**Is not He Powerful to give life to the dead? [d]

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a **(33)** The description applies to every opponent.

b **(35)** The haughty opponent is warned that destruction is very near. The repetition shows that the opponents were threatened with a double punishment, namely, in this life and in the Hereafter. In fact, the double punishment is spoken of throughout the chapter.

c **(36)** The verse draws attention to the seriousness of life and to man's responsibility for his actions — a doctrine denied as much today as it was by the Arabs.

d **(40)** The giving of "life to the dead" not only signifies raising after death, but also spiritually raising a dead people to life.

Chapter 76

Al-Insān Man

This chapter, entitled *Man* from the occurrence of this word in the first verse, deals with man's attainment to perfection. It shows that in the attainment of this perfection there are two stages: the suppression of all evil tendencies and the gaining of strength to perform great deeds of sacrifice. Towards the end, the chapter says that if those addressed by the Holy Prophet do not accept his message, Allah will cause another people to take their place, for the Quran must accomplish its object of enabling man to attain to perfection. Its revelation belongs to a very early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **Attainment of perfection**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Surely there came over man a time when he was nothing that could be mentioned. **2**Surely We have created man from sperm mixed (with ovum), to try him, so We have made him hearing, seeing. **3**We have truly shown him the way; he may be thankful or unthankful.[a] **4**Surely We have prepared for the disbelievers chains and shackles and a burning Fire.[b]

5 The righteous truly drink of a cup tempered with camphor [c]

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a **(3)** The right way is shown clearly; it is for man himself to walk in it and thus be thankful, or away from it and thus be unthankful. Or the meaning may be *he may accept or reject*.

b **(4)** See 69:32 footnote.

c **(5)** The original for *camphor* is *kāfūr*, which is derived from *kafr* meaning *to cover* or *to suppress*. Medically camphor is a cool and refreshing aromatic, but here it is used in reference to its original significance. The cup of which the righteous drink is the cup of the love of Allah, and its mixture with *kāfūr* is to indicate that by this cup all low desires and sexual passions which lead man away from the path of righteousness are suppressed, in the same manner as poisonous matter is suppressed by camphor. Man needs an intoxication and for it he generally resorts to alcoholic drinks, which bring in their train evil and slavery to sexual passions. The Prophet intoxicated his followers with the love of Allah, and as a result of this, their evil tendencies were altogether suppressed. Verses 7 and 8 show clearly that it is of the change brought about in this very life that the Quran is speaking here. In the spiritual advancement of man this is the first stage, because it is not until the evil tendencies of man are completely suppressed that he is able to advance to the higher stages of spiritual perfection.

— [6]a fountain from which the servants of Allah drink, making it flow in abundance.[a] [7]They fulfil (their) vows and fear a day, the evil of which is widespread. [8]And they give food, out of love for Him, to the poor and the orphan and the captive. [9]We feed you, for Allah's pleasure only — we desire from you neither reward nor thanks.[b] [10]Surely we fear from our Lord a stern, distressful day.

[11] So Allah will guard them from the evil of that day, and cause them to meet with splendour and happiness; [12]and reward them, for their steadfastness, with a Garden and with silk, [13]reclining in it on raised couches; they will see therein neither (excessive heat of) sun nor intense cold. [14]And close down upon them are its shadows, and its fruits are made near (to them), easy to reach. [15]And round about them are made to go vessels of silver and goblets of glass, [16]crystal-clear, made of silver — they have measured them according to a measure.[c] [17]And they are made to drink therein a cup tempered with ginger[d] — [18](of) a fountain in it called Salsabīl.[e] [19]And round

***a* (6)** The *fountain from which the servants of Allah drink* is the fountain of the love of God referred to in the previous verse. It is not a cup which may be exhausted with one draught; it is a fountain. The faithful are here spoken of as the servants of Allah — *'ibād Allāh* — because an *'abd* (singular of *'ibād*) is really one who is entirely lost in the love of God. But here we are further told that they not only drink of it themselves but they make it to flow forth in such abundance that others also may partake of it.

***b* (9)** The fulfilment of vows spoken of in v. 7 is in relation to the service of God, or the act of bringing themselves closer and closer to God, while the feeding of the poor spoken of in verses 8 and 9 is in relation to the service of humanity. Thus they combine the service of God with the service of humanity. The words *for Allah's pleasure* clearly show that it is of the love of God that these verses speak. Man worships Allah for the love of Allah, but the Quran requires him to serve humanity also for the love of Allah.

***c* (16)** That is, everyone will receive them according to the measure of his deeds.

***d* (17)** The Arabic word for ginger is *zanjabīl*. It is said to have a property that is heating or warming, strengthening and exhilarating. The first cup of the love of God is spoken of in v. 5, as being tempered with camphor and bringing about suppression of evil, and this second cup is now spoken of as strengthening and exhilarating, i.e., enabling man to perform great and noble deeds. The love of God thus not only suppresses the evil inclinations of man, but also enables him to attain a still higher stage of spiritual advancement, giving him the strength to perform wonderful deeds of self-sacrifice.

***e* (18)** *Salsabīl* means *easy, sweet, rapid-flowing*. According to some it is made up of *sal*, meaning *ask*, and *sabīl, way*, as if it meant, *Ask your Lord a way to it*.

about them will go youths, never altering in age;[a] when *y*ou see them *y*ou will think them to be scattered pearls. **20**And when *y*ou look there, *y*ou see blessings and a great kingdom.[b] **21**On them are garments of fine green silk and thick brocade, and they are adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord makes them to drink a pure drink.[c] **22**Surely this is a reward for you, and your striving is recompensed.

Section 2: **Another generation will be raised up**

23 Surely We have revealed the Quran to *y*ou, in portions. **24**So wait patiently for the judgment of *y*our Lord,[d] and do not obey a sinner or an ungrateful one among them. **25**And glorify the name of *y*our Lord morning and evening. **26**And during part of the night adore Him, and glorify Him throughout a long night.

27 Surely these (people) love the transitory life and neglect a grievous day before them. **28**We created them and made firm their make, and, when We will, We can bring in their place others like them by change.[e] **29**Surely this is a Reminder; so whoever wishes, let him take a way to his Lord. **30**And you do not (so) wish, unless Allah please.[f] Surely Allah is ever Knowing, Wise. **31**He admits

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a **(19)** Because these are heavenly blessings, and decay cannot overtake them; see 56:17.

b **(20)** The word *thamma* meaning *there* or *thither* is used here in reference to the spiritual kingdom which is granted to the faithful. They are granted blessings and a great kingdom in this life as well, to which man shuts his eyes on account of his ignorance.

c **(21)** As they led pure lives here, they were made to drink a pure drink in this very life. They will have a pure drink in the Hereafter, too, the heavenly life being the purest that can be imagined.

d **(24)** This shows that the blessings mentioned in the previous section will also find a manifestation in this life; the Divine judgment will bring about the fall of one party and the rise of another.

e **(28)** The mention of the grievous day in the previous verse and the statement here that another people will take the place of these are clear prophecies for this life. Hence it is called a warning in the verse that follows.

f **(30)** The faithful may be spoken of here; v. 29 states that *whoever wishes, let him take a way to his Lord*, and v. 31 refers to the faithful in the words, *He admits whom He pleases to His mercy*. The meaning is that true and sincere

whom He pleases to His mercy; and the wrongdoers — He has prepared for them a painful punishment.

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believers have so completely submitted themselves to the Divine will and are so completely resigned that all their wishes and desires are in accordance with Allah's pleasure (the words conveying: *you do not wish but what Allah pleases*).

Taking the words as a general statement, note that the chapter opens with the clear statement in v. 3, *We have truly shown him the way; he may be thankful or unthankful;* so that man has not been constrained by God to adopt a particular course, whether for good or for evil. The end of the chapter is equally clear: *Surely this is a Reminder; so whoever wishes, let him take a way to his Lord*. The words — *you do not wish, unless Allah please* — therefore mean that *man's choice would have no effect, if it did not please Allah*. There are two things necessary for the guidance of man: firstly, the revelation of the Reminder by Allah, and secondly, the acceptance of that Reminder by man. If Allah had not pleased to reveal the Reminder, man's choice would have been nowhere.

Chapter 77

Al-Mursalāt Those Sent Forth

This chapter is a supplement to the previous, for while it is shown there how the righteous attain to perfection, here the fate of the rejectors is made clear. *Those sent forth* are the Divine messengers, the rejection of whose message brings evil consequences, and that word (*mursalāt*), occurring in the first verse, gives its name to this chapter. The fourth year of the Holy Prophet's mission is regarded as the probable date of the revelation of this chapter.

Section 1: **Consequences of rejection**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By those sent forth to spread goodness! **2**Then those driving off the chaff! **3**And those spreading (goodness), far and wide! **4**Then those making a distinction! **5**Then those offering the Reminder, **6**to clear or to warn! — **7**Surely what you are promised will come to pass.[a]

8 So when the stars are made to disappear, **9**and when the heaven is torn apart, **10**and when the mountains are carried away as dust, **11**and when the messengers are made to reach their appointed time,[b] **12**to what day is the doom fixed? **13**To the day of Decision.

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a **(7)** As stated in 37:1 footnote, attention is drawn in what are called oaths to certain indisputable facts, which lead to a conclusion. The conclusion here is that the opponents are doomed (v. 12). The characteristics described in the first six verses apply to prophets whose opponents were destroyed. This is made clear by the mention of the appointed time of the messengers in v. 11, by which, of course, is meant the appointed time of the destruction of the enemies of Truth. They are told to consider how Truth was spread by former prophets. In v. 1 they are spoken of as being sent with goodness; in v. 2, as driving off the chaff of falsehood before them; in v. 3, as scattering the seed of goodness far and wide or giving life to dead earth; in v. 4, as ultimately bringing about a distinction between truth and falsehood, and in v. 5 and 6 as giving the Reminder that one party may be cleared and the other warned. These considerations about the former prophets should lead the opponents to the certain conclusion that the same Divine law was working in the case of the Holy Prophet, and their doom was also certain.

b **(11)** The disappearance of the stars (v. 8) was a sign for the Arabs of the befalling of a calamity. The tearing apart of the heaven (v. 9) indicated the same,

14And what will make *you* comprehend what the day of Decision is? 15Woe on that day to the rejectors! 16Did We not destroy the former generations? 17Then We followed them up with later ones. 18Thus do We deal with the guilty. 19Woe on that day to the rejectors![a]

20 Did We not create you from a worthless seeming water? 21Then We placed it in a secure resting-place, 22till an appointed term, 23so We determined — how well are We at determining! 24Woe on that day to the rejectors! 25Have We not made the earth draw to itself 26the living and the dead,[b] 27and made in it lofty mountains, and given you to drink sweet water? 28Woe on that day to the rejectors!

29 Walk on to that which you called a lie. 30Walk on to the shadow, having three branches,[c] 31neither cool, nor availing against the flame. 32It sends up sparks like palaces, 33as if they were yellow camels.[d] 34Woe on that day to the rejectors! 35This is the day on

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because the heaven was considered a protection. Compare 21:32: *And We have made the heaven a guarded canopy*; see 73:18 footnote. The passing away of the mountains (v. 10) signified the disappearance from among them of their great men, whose protection they sought in time of distress. All these things would be brought about when came the appointed time of the messengers, i.e., the time of the destruction of their opponents.

***a* (19)** Note the clear words of verses 16–19. The former generations were destroyed because of their wickedness and others were brought up in their place; such will always be the fate of the guilty — the day of their doom is the day of Decision. A complete manifestation of that day is, however, reserved for the Hereafter.

***b* (26)** This refers to the law of gravitation. It further shows that the belief relating to the ascent of Jesus to the fourth heaven is erroneous.

***c* (30)** The word *ẓill,* translated here as "shadow", is extensively used to carry a number of other significances, such as covering, protection, a plentiful or an easy state of life. The three branches of it are the three characteristics thereof stated in the verses that follow; see the next footnote.

***d* (33)** They reject the Truth and seek comfort and ease in material benefits. They are given a shade, but it does not serve the purpose of shade. It is devoid of the *coolness* of shade — they cannot find solace in it. Nor does it avail them against *flames*, which stand here for the distresses of life. More than this, what they mistook for ease and plenty is itself a source of distress. Sparks arise therefrom, sparks as big as palaces. In fact, the very palaces which they make for their comfort turn into sparks, which set fire to all around them. Perhaps there is a deeper reference here to the modern implements of destruction on account of their

which they do not speak, [36]nor are they allowed to offer excuses. [37]Woe on that day to the rejectors! [38]This is the day of Decision; We have gathered you and the ancients.[a] [39]So if you have a plan, plan against me (now).[b] [40]Woe on that day to the rejectors!

Section 2: **Consequences of rejection**

41 Surely the dutiful are amid shades and fountains, [42]and fruits such as they desire. [43]Eat and drink pleasantly for what you did. [44]Thus do We reward the doers of good. [45]Woe on that day to the rejectors! [46]Eat and enjoy yourselves for a little while; surely you are guilty. [47]Woe on that day to the rejectors! [48]And when it is said to them, Bow down (before Allah), they do not bow down. [49]Woe on that day to the rejectors! [50]In what announcement after this will they then believe?

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magnitude and extensive destructive effect. These sparks are further compared to *yellow camels*, which is true not only as regards their colour but also because of the succession with which these big sparks follow one another, like camels walking one after another in a line.

a **(38)** This gathering together will take place in the Resurrection, but the opponents of Truth, earlier as well as later, are gathered together in punishment in this life, too.

b **(39)** The opponents are even so early challenged to execute their plans against the Holy Prophet.

Chapter 78

Al-Naba' The Announcement

This chapter is entitled *Al-Naba'* or the Announcement, from the mention in v. 2 of the tremendous or very great announcement. It announces to humanity that God will give life to a dead earth through the Holy Prophet. It speaks also of the day of Decision to show that Truth will ultimately triumph over opposition to it. Its revelation belongs to the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **The day of decision**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 About what do they ask one another? **2**About the tremendous announcement **3**concerning which they differ.[a] **4**No, they will soon know; **5**no, again, they will soon know. **6**Have We not made the earth an expanse **7**and the mountains as pegs? **8**And We have created you in pairs, **9**and made your sleep for rest, **10**and made the night a covering, **11**and made the day for seeking livelihood. **12**And We have made above you seven strong (bodies), **13**and made a shining lamp,[b] **14**and We send down from the clouds water pouring forth in abundance, **15**that We may bring forth with it grain and vegetation, **16**and luxuriant gardens.

***a* (3)** Some commentators take the "tremendous announcement" to signify the Quran, others the prophethood of Muhammad, and still others the day of Resurrection. In fact, all three are included. The Quran was revealed as the greatest of the Divine messages hitherto given to humanity, because it was a message for the whole of humanity, compared with the smaller messages to this or that nation. It was, moreover, the most complete message. It gave the great news that the whole of humanity would receive life through it. They differed about it not only in the sense that they rejected it, but also because they put in different suggestions, some saying that the Prophet was a madman, others that he was a dreamer, others still that he was a poet or a fabricator, and so on.

***b* (13)** The *seven strong bodies* of v. 12 are apparently the seven major planets of the solar system, the words *above you* clearly showing that the earth itself belongs to the same class, and the sun, the centre of the solar system, is spoken of in the words *a shining lamp*.

17 Surely the day of Decision is appointed [a] — **18**the day when the trumpet is blown, so you come forth in companies, **19**and the heaven is opened so it becomes as doors, **20**and the mountains are moved off, so they remain a (mere) semblance.[b] **21**Surely hell lies in wait, **22**a destination for the inordinate, **23**living in it for long years.[c] **24**They do not taste therein coolness nor drink, **25**but boiling and intensely cold water, **26**a recompense corresponding.[d] **27**Surely they did not fear the reckoning, **28**and rejected Our messages, denying (them). **29**And We have recorded everything in a book, **30**so taste, for We shall add to you nothing but punishment.[e]

Section 2: **The day of decision**

31 Surely for those who keep their duty is achievement,[f] **32**gardens and vineyards, **33**and youthful (companions), equals in age,[g] **34**and a pure cup. **35**They do not hear therein vain words

***a* (17)** That there is a day of Decision in this life too, which is synonymous with the ultimate triumph of Truth and the doom of opposition to its spread, is amply clear from all these early chapters.

***b* (20)** The description contained in verses 18–20 is a prophetical description of the final triumph of Truth. People will come forth in companies to accept the Truth (see ch. 110: "when the help of Allah and victory comes and you see people entering the religion of Allah in companies"); the heaven is opened and the dead earth receives life (v. 19); the mountains — the great opposing forces — melt away, and all that remains of opposition is a mere semblance.

***c* (23)** The use of the word *aḥqāb* (long years), which signifies a limited period, leaves no doubt that the punishment of hell is not eternal. Such words are never used regarding the bliss of heavenly life, which is a clear indication that the latter will never come to an end, while the former shall; see 11:107 footnote.

***d* (26)** The punishment of hell is described here as a *recompense corresponding to the sin*. Various names are given to hell itself, and various sorts of punishment are spoken of. Thus every sinner has his own hell, corresponding to his sin.

***e* (30)** As they in their inordinacy added evil to evil, they shall have correspondingly punishment added to punishment. The addition in punishment lasts only until the evil is requited.

***f* (31)** The reward of good is *achievement* — achievement of the object of this life as also of the great goal of the next life. It is this *achievement* which becomes a Garden.

***g* (33)** It should be noted that neither the word *kawā'ib* ("youthful") nor *atrāb* ("equals in age") is preceded or followed by any qualifying words. Hence *kawā'ib* only means *showing freshness of youth.* For "equals in age", see 38:52 footnote. For further explanation, see 52:20 footnote.

nor lying — [36]a reward from *y*our Lord, a gift sufficient; [37]the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, the Beneficent, they are not able to address Him. [38]The day when the Spirit and the angels stand in ranks;[a] none shall speak except he whom the Beneficent permits and he speaks aright. [39]That is the True Day, so whoever wishes may take refuge with his Lord. [40]Truly We warn you of a punishment near at hand[b] — the day when man will see what (deeds) his hands have sent ahead, and the disbeliever will say: I wish I were dust!

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a **(38)** The word *al-rūḥ,* translated as the Spirit, really signifies *Divine inspiration* or *Divine revelation*. See 40:15, 70:4 and footnotes there. Gabriel is called *al-rūḥ* because he brings the Divine revelation to the Prophet. The human spirit can, in fact, be called *al-rūḥ* only when it receives light through Divine inspiration. The meaning would thus be that on the day of Judgment the faithful and the angels stand in ranks in the presence of God.

b **(40)** The punishment of which the disbelievers are warned throughout the chapter is *a punishment near at hand*, which term, like the *nearer punishment* of 32:21, indicates the punishment of this life.

Chapter 79

Al-Nāzi'āt Those Who Yearn

This chapter is named after the word which occurs in the first verse as a description of the groups or parties of the faithful who were destined to bring about a transformation in the world. Their chief characteristics are mentioned in the first four verses as being those who *yearned* ardently after God, and who went forth cheerfully braving all opposition, then ran swiftly in the cause of Truth, and went ahead of all such communities who had a similar yearning in the past and regulated affairs. These verses are followed by predicting the great revolution which would be brought about by their exertions. It is a revelation of the early period at Makkah.

Section 1: **The great commotion**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By those yearning vehemently! **2**And those going forth cheerfully! **3**And those running swiftly! **4**And those that are foremost going ahead! **5**And those regulating the Affair![a] **6**The day when the quaking one shall quake[b] — **7**the consequence will

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a **(5)** These verses give a description of the spiritual characteristics of the faithful. There was a vehement yearning in the hearts of the believers for their Maker (v. 1), and it was this ardent desire that made them go forth in the way of God cheerfully in spite of the severest opposition (v. 2); they ran swiftly (v. 3), so that they traversed eastern and western lands in an incredibly short time; they were thus ahead of all those who ever carried the message of Truth to their fellowman (v. 4); and lastly, they regulated the affair of the spread of Truth in the world (v. 5), so that the farthest east (China) and farthest west (Morocco and Spain) were lit with the light of Islam within a hundred years. Compare 32:5. Taking the words in a general sense, they indicate the various stages through which an affair is brought to a successful issue. The first stage is that of an ardent desire or yearning for it; the second is that of going forth cheerfully to accomplish it; the third is that of running swiftly for its accomplishment; the fourth is that of going ahead of others; and the fifth that of regulating it in the best possible way.

b **(6)** The quaking of the earth is often spoken of as an indication of a great revolution. What is meant is therefore that the efforts of the faithful spoken of in the first five verses will bring about a great commotion or a great revolution in the world, indicating the transformation which was to be brought about through them.

follow it.[a] [8]Hearts that day will palpitate, [9]their eyes downcast. [10]They say: Shall we indeed be restored to (our) first state? [11]What! After we are rotten bones? [12]They say: That would then be a return with loss. [13]It is only a single cry, [14]when — lo! — they will be awakened.[b]

15 Has not the story of Moses come to *y*ou, [16]when his Lord called him in the holy valley, Tuwa? [17]Go to Pharaoh, surely he has rebelled. [18]And say: Will *y*ou purify *y*ourself? [19]And I will guide *y*ou to *y*our Lord so that *y*ou fear (Him). [20]So he showed him the mighty sign; [21]but he denied and disobeyed. [22]Then he went back hastily, [23]so he gathered (his people) and called out, [24]and said: I am your Lord, the most high. [25]So Allah seized him with the punishment of the Hereafter and of this life.[c] [26]Surely in this there is a lesson for him who fears.

Section 2: **The great calamity**

27 Are you the stronger in creation or the heaven? He made it. [28]He raised high its height,[d] and made it perfect, [29]and He made dark its night and brought out its light. [30]And the earth, He cast it after that.[e] [31]He brought forth from it its water and its pasture. [32]And the mountains, He made them firm, [33]a provision for you and for your cattle.[f]

***a* (7)** The consequence of great commotions is the ultimate triumph of Truth. But the triumph of Truth is also the destruction of the opponents of Truth; hence the mention of *palpitating hearts* and *downcast eyes* in the next two verses.

***b* (14)** The spiritual awakening — the great transformation to be brought about by the Prophet — is spoken of here in clear words. This awakening was first to be brought about in Arabia and then in the whole world.

***c* (25)** The nature of the punishment in store for the opponents is made clear by citing the example of Pharaoh.

***d* (28)** The raising high of the height is an allusion to its extremely great height. There is a reference here to the great distances of the heavenly bodies, which stagger human imagination.

***e* (30)** Two things are made clear in this brief statement. (1) The earth was brought into existence after the heaven, or the starry creation; and (2) it was cast away, as a stone is cast away, from a bigger creation.

***f* (33)** How the earth was made fit for living on is next made clear. Its water, which is the source of all its life, was brought forth from it, and water made possible the growth of vegetation. The mountains were raised so that they might

34 So when the great Calamity comes[a] — **35**the day when man remembers all that he strove for, **36**and hell is made manifest to him who sees. **37**Then as for him who is inordinate, **38**and prefers the life of this world, **39**hell is surely the abode. **40**And as for him who fears to stand before his Lord and restrains himself from low desires,[b] **41**the Garden is surely the abode.

42 They ask *y*ou about the Hour, when will that take place, **43**about which *y*ou remind (them)? **44**To *y*our Lord is the goal of it.[c] **45***Y*ou are only a warner to him who fears it. **46**On the day when they see it, it will be as if they had remained (in this world) only for an evening or a morning.

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serve as a *provision for you* and *your cattle*. The mountains are the sources of rivers and through these all living things on earth are provided with sustenance.

a **(34)** By the great calamity here is generally understood only the *Resurrection*, but the words of v. 25 make it clear that the reference is as much to the calamity of this life as to the Resurrection. The making of hell manifest to him *who sees* in v. 36 is a clear indication of the same; the hell of the next life is spoken of in v. 39.

b **(40)** Refraining from low desires is the chief source from which grows a paradise. This further shows that the description given in the first five verses is really a description of the spiritual advancement of the faithful.

c **(44)** The Hour is in itself a manifestation of Divine purpose. The destruction or punishment of the disbelievers is not an end in itself. The great goal of this punishment is the Lord — *Rabb* — Who brings everything to perfection, and the real goal of human life is thus the Lord or the meeting with the Lord.

Chapter 80

'Abasa He Frowned

Opening with a touching incident as to how a blind man interrupted the Holy Prophet's conversation with some of the chiefs of the Quraish, and how the Prophet *frowned* at this interruption, this chapter, to which the incident gives its title, really states that the poor and the humble who accepted the Truth would be raised to eminence, and therefore the Prophet should not be anxious if eminent men did not listen to his message. The chapter thus speaks of the greatness to which the Quran would raise its followers, and of its conquests in the far future. It is one of the very early revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 He frowned and turned away, **2** because the blind man came to him.[a] **3**And what would make *y*ou know that he might purify himself, **4**or be mindful, so the Reminder should benefit him? **5**As for him who considers himself free from need, **6**to him *y*ou

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***a* (2)** A blind man came to the Holy Prophet while he was explaining the doctrines of Islam to an assembly of the leaders of the Quraish and, interrupting, asked to be taught what Allah had revealed to him. The Holy Prophet took this untimely interruption ill — *he frowned* and did not pay any attention to his question; on which he received this revelation. This incident shows that the source of the Holy Prophet's revelation was other than his own mind. It may be noted that the Prophet's inattention to an intruder, while he had not yet finished his conversation, was quite natural. He did not chide the intruder for his interruption, but only disliked it and gave him no answer. An individual would himself be the last person to give permanence to a reproval for his own act. Hence the source from which the Holy Prophet received his revelation was outside his own heart or his own inclinations.

It may be noted that the chief trait of the Holy Prophet's character was his great regard for the poor. There are numerous incidents on record showing his service of the poor. He not only loved the poor from the time that he was an ordinary citizen to the time that he became the ruler of the whole of Arabia, but he himself chose to be classed among the poor in his life as well as in his death. Even when the wealth of Arabia lay at his feet, and his wives claimed share in that wealth, he showed his readiness to sacrifice every comfort, but not the honour of remaining *a poor man*.

do attend. [7]And no blame is on *y*ou, if he does not purify himself.[a] [8]And as to him who comes to *y*ou striving hard, [9]and he fears — [10]to him *y*ou pay no regard. [11]No! — surely it is a Reminder. [12]So whoever wishes, let him be mindful of it. [13]In honoured books, [14]exalted, purified, [15]in the hands of scribes, [16]noble, virtuous.[b]

17 Woe to man! How ungrateful is he! [18]Of what thing did He create him? [19]Of a small life-germ. He creates him, then proportions him,[c] [20]then makes the way easy for him, [21]then He causes him to die, then assigns to him a grave, [22]then, when He will, He raises him to life again. [23]No, but he does not fulfil what He commands him. [24]Then let man look at his food — [25]how We pour down abundant water, [26]then split the earth, splitting (it) apart, [27]then cause the grain to grow in it, [28]and grapes and clover, [29]and the olive and the palm, [30]and thick gardens, [31]and fruits and vegetation — [32]a provision for you and your cattle.

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a **(7)** If the Quraish leaders would not come out of the impurities of sin, the Prophet was not to blame for it, so that on their account he should neglect the poor who came to him earnestly desirous to be delivered from the bondage of sin.

b **(16)** The six verses from 11 to 16 are really a comfort to the Holy Prophet for the hint contained in the first ten is that the leaders would not heed his warning or accept his message, and that therefore he must apply himself to the poor, who would be raised to eminence by the Quran. These verses tell him that the Quran is a *ta<u>dh</u>kirah,* i.e., *a reminder* or *a source of eminence* (see also 2:152, 7:2, 38:1). Verses 15 and 16 clearly state that the scribes of the Quran will be virtuous men, who will be honoured in the world. Not only was this true of men like Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali, who were among the first scribes of the Holy Quran, but even in its later history great rulers of empires earned their livelihood by writing copies of the Quran. Hence the prophecy was given as a comfort to the Holy Prophet that he should not be grieved because the rich and the leaders did not accept him, for the poor who accepted him would be raised to eminence through the Quran.

c **(19)** The word *qaddara* ordinarily signifies *he made a thing according to a measure*, or *proportioned it*, the significance being that God has allotted to man a certain sphere in which he can make progress. But this word sometimes carries the same significance as *aqdara*, meaning to *empower* or *enable* someone. The meaning in this case would be that Allah has not only created man, but he has also given him power and ability, so that he can make progress, if he likes.

33 But when the deafening cry comes,[a] **34**the day when a man
flees from his brother, **35**and his mother and his father, **36**and his
spouse and his sons. **37**Every man of them, that day, will have con-
cern enough to make him indifferent to others. **38**Faces on that day
will be bright, **39**laughing, joyous. **40**And faces on that day will have
dust on them, **41**darkness covering them.[b] **42**Those are the dis-
believers, the wicked.

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a **(33)** The word used signifies *a cry that deafens by its vehemence*. Hence it is made to apply to the day of Resurrection; but it also means any calamity or misfortune, or *a severe calamity.*

b **(41)** The brightness of the faces spoken of here indicates their *joy*; their being covered by darkness indicates *sorrow* or *gloom*.

Chapter 81

Al-Takwīr The Folding Up

This chapter is named after the mention of the *folding up* of the sun in the first verse, which means that it will lose its light. This may refer to the end of things or metaphorically to the sun of the fortune of the opponents becoming dark. The chapter begins by speaking prophetically of certain events of the distant future fulfilled in the modern age. It concludes by making clear that the Holy Prophet's light will reach the remotest horizon and the Quran will reach all nations. Its revelation belongs to the very early period at Makkah.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 When the sun is folded up,[a] **2**and when the stars are dust-coloured,[b] **3**and when the mountains are made to pass away,[c] **4**and when the camels are abandoned,[d] **5**and when the wild animals

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a **(1)** For the *folding up* of the sun, see the introductory note above. Verses 1–13 speak of twelve signs, some of which undoubtedly relate to this life and the rest may therefore also be taken as referring metaphorically to this life. The Resurrection of the dead in another life may often contain a deeper reference to the spiritual resurrection which was to be brought about by the Prophet in this very life, and hence the combination of the real with the metaphorical, as here.

b **(2)** The darkening of the stars indicates complete darkness. Not only would the light of the day disappear, but even the smaller lights would become dark, and so the opponents of Truth would be left in utter darkness.

c **(3)** The passing away of the mountains signifies the passing away of the greatest obstacles to the spread of Truth; see 20:105 footnote.

d **(4)** *'Iṯẖār* is plural of *'uṯẖarā',* meaning a she-camel that has been ten months pregnant. It is applied to the she-camel until she has delivered and also after she has delivered, and to a camel that is milked. Such camels are undoubtedly the most precious, and their being abandoned may stand for the abandonment of camels generally. Bearing on this subject is a hadith of the Prophet: "Camels will be abandoned so that they will not be used for going swiftly (from one place to another)" (*Miṯẖkāt,* 27:5; Sahih Muslim, 1:71). This clearly refers to a time when *swifter* modes of going from one place to another will come into existence, so that camels will no more be needed.

are gathered together,[a] [6]and when the cities are made to swell,[b] [7]and when people are united,[c] [8]and when the one buried alive is asked [9]for what sin she was killed,[d] [10]and when the books are spread,[e] [11]and when the heaven has its covering removed,[f] [12]and when hell is kindled,[g] [13]and when the Garden is brought near[h]

***a* (5)** The gathering together (*ḥashr*) of wild animals seems also to be a prophecy relating to the distant future, when the wild animals were to be gathered together from all corners of the world into big towns. It may refer metaphorically to the gathering together of barbarous people into towns and cities.

***b* (6)** The word *biḥār* is the plural of *baḥr,* which means *sea* or *river,* as well as of *baḥrah* which is synonymous with *baldah* or *a town.* The swelling of cities is a clear indication that advancing civilization will result in people gathering more and more in cities. The next verse corroborates this significance, as it speaks in clear words of the *uniting of people*.

***c* (7)** The uniting of people is one of the greatest achievements of modern civilization. The time is not far distant indeed when the whole world will be united and may become as a single nation.

***d* (9)** The reference here is to the burying alive of daughters, a practice common among the pre-Islamic Arabs who, either for fear of hunger or disgrace, buried alive their female children. The questioning refers to the future when, with the predominance of Islam in Arabia, this barbarous practice was to be abolished. But the *one buried alive* may stand generally for the female sex, and the reference here may, therefore, be to the general tyranny of the male over the female. (*Editor's Note:* Killing of girls at birth still takes place in some parts of the world. Abortion of foetuses for the reason of being female is a modern extension of the same barbarous practice.)

***e* (10)** This is also a prophetic reference to the distant future, with the circulation of books and papers to an incredible extent. The Muslim world did immense service to the cause of the circulation of literature, and the revival of learning in the West, which has brought about the great spread of books and papers, was a direct result of the impetus which Islam gave to the study of letters.

***f* (11)** The removal of the covering of the heaven signifies the unveiling of the mysteries relating to the heavens, which is one of the great achievements of modern science. Compare 99:2 where the earth is spoken of as yielding her treasures.

***g* (12)** Just as the righteous are promised heaven in this very life, the wicked are told that hell would be kindled for them even here, if they had only the eyes to see it. Compare 79:36. The forces of materialism have already engulfed the world in a burning hell in the form of modern wars.

***h* (13)** God has not doomed this world to utter destruction, but when it has tasted somewhat of the evil consequences of its own doings, Divine mercy will take it by the hand and bring the Garden of bliss near to it by bringing about a spiritual awakening. Thus the solace of mind which man can attain to through realization of the Divine in him is here described as the bringing near of the Garden.

— [14]every soul will know what it has prepared.[a]

15 Indeed, I call to witness the stars, [16]running their course, (and) setting, [17]and the night when it departs, [18]and the morning when it brightens,[b] [19]surely it is the word of a bountiful Messenger, [20]the possessor of strength, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne, [21]one (to be) obeyed, and faithful.[c] [22]And your companion is not mad. [23]And truly he saw himself on the clear horizon.[d] [24]Nor is he miserly (with knowledge) of the unseen.[e] [25]Nor is it the word of an accursed devil — [26]where then are you going?[f] [27]It is nothing but a Reminder for the nations,[g] [28]for whomever among you who wishes to go straight. [29]And you do not (so) wish, unless Allah please, the Lord of the worlds.[h]

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a **(14)** Man will then become conscious that there is a higher life, which is his real goal, and he will know what to do to attain that goal.

b **(18)** The calling to witness of *the stars that run their course and set* also draws attention to the disasters that awaited the opponents of the Truth; see 53:1 footnote. The departing of the night and the rise of the bright morning is clearly the disappearance of the darkness of ignorance, giving place to the bright light of the sun of Islam.

c **(21)** Verses 19–21 refer to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. He is the bountiful Messenger (*Rasūl Karīm*), the one to be obeyed (see 4:64), and the faithful (*al-Amīn*). His being *possessor of strength* prophetically refers to his future career and to his ultimate triumph over his enemies.

d **(23)** This means that his light would shine in the remotest corners of the world. See also 53:7 and footnote.

e **(24)** This shows that there are some great prophecies relating to the future in what has gone before.

f **(26)** Wonder is expressed that despite the clearest evidence of Truth, humanity has been so slow to accept it.

g **(27)** This, one of the earliest revelations, clearly shows that the foundations of the universality of the message of Islam were laid on the very first day.

h **(29)** See 76:30 footnote for explanation.

Chapter 82

Al-Infiṭār The Tearing Apart

This chapter, which receives its title from the mention in the first verse of the heaven becoming *torn apart,* is a counterpart of the previous chapter since it refers to the final triumph of Islam in its opening verses. It speaks also of the utter helplessness of the opponents at that time. Its revelation belongs to the very early period at Makkah.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 When the heaven is torn apart, **2**and when the stars become dispersed, **3**and when the rivers are made to flow forth, **4**and when the graves are laid open[a] — **5**every soul will know what it has sent ahead and what it has held back.[b]

6 O man, what entices *y*ou away from *y*our Lord, the Gracious, **7**Who created *y*ou, then made *y*ou complete, then made *y*ou in a right good state? — **8**into whatever form He pleases He casts *y*ou. **9**No, but you call the Judgment a lie, **10**and surely there are keepers over you, **11**honourable recorders, **12**they know what you do.[c]

***a* (4)** Taken metaphorically verses 1–4 tell us how a great spiritual rising would be brought about. The *tearing apart of the heaven* would mean that the doors of heaven will open and Divine help will come to the Prophet. The *dispersing of the stars* signifies the spreading abroad of the bearers of the message of Truth, who are likened to stars, as the Prophet said: "My companions are as stars" (*Mishkāt,* 27:13). The indication is that a time would come when the teachers of Truth would disperse themselves in Arabia, and then throughout the world. The *flowing forth of the rivers* means that rivers of Divine knowledge would be made to reach the dry lands within and without Arabia. The *laying open of the graves* signifies the spiritual resurrection which was to be brought about by the Holy Prophet, for the reprobate are clearly spoken of as being in the graves (35:22). Thus all these four verses speak of the great change that was to be brought about in the world by the preaching of the Prophet. Taken literally, these verses speak of the Resurrection.

***b* (5)** The knowledge spoken of here will accrue before the day of Resurrection. A greater manifestation of the same will, however, take place in the life after death.

***c* (12)** That every action of man is recorded and bears fruit is one of the principal doctrines of the religion of Islam. Of course, it is not meant that angels

13 Surely the virtuous are in bliss, **14**and the wicked are truly in burning Fire — **15**they will enter it on the day of Judgment. **16**And will not be absent from it. **17**And what will make *y*ou realize what the day of Judgment is? **18**Again, what will make *y*ou realize what the day of Judgment is? **19**The day when no soul controls anything for (the benefit of) another soul. And the command on that day is Allah's.

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are sitting with pens in their hands, at desks, noting down who did a good deed, or who did a bad deed, and at what time. That would be a distortion of the teaching of the Quran. For what that record is, see the next chapter, where both the record of the righteous and the record of the wicked is spoken of. See also 17:13–14.

Chapter 83

Al-Taṭfīf Default in Duty

This chapter condemns those who make a *default in their duties* or *cheat others,* in particular by giving *short measure*; hence its name. It teaches the utmost rectitude in one's dealings. The chapter explains the nature of the two records: that of the wicked and that of the virtuous. The guilty suffer because they defraud and cheat others. The virtuous prosper because they fulfil their duties and are true to their obligations. Its revelation belongs to the very early period at Makkah.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Woe to the cheaters,[a] **2**who, when they take the measure (of their dues) from people, take it fully, **3**but when they measure out to others or weigh out for them, they give less than is due! **4**Do they not think that they will be raised again, **5**to a mighty day? — **6**the day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds.

7 No, surely the record of the wicked is in the prison.[b] **8**And what will make *y*ou know what the prison is? **9**It is a written book. **10**Woe on that day to the rejectors **11**who call the day of Judgment a lie! **12**And none calls it a lie but every exceeder of limits, every sinful one; **13**when Our messages are recited to him, he says: Stories of the ancients! **14**No, rather, what they earned is rust upon their hearts. **15**No, surely they are that day debarred from their Lord.[c]

***a* (1)** The cheaters are not only *those who cheat others by giving them less than what is their due*, but also *those who make a default in any of their duties*. The taking of the measure and the measuring out, in the next two verses, must also be read in a general sense.

***b* (7)** This *prison* should not be taken as signifying a *jail*, for in the verses that follow the Quran itself explains what this prison is. In v. 9, it is spoken of as *a written book*. This *written book* or *record*, which preserves the deeds of the evildoers, is called *a prison* because it keeps their faculties for the doing of good shut up as within a prison, and the very consequences of their evil deeds hamper their progress. See verses 14 and 15, where the actions of the evildoers are spoken of as being *rust* on their hearts, and they are further referred to as being *debarred* from their Lord.

***c* (15)** The punishment of the wicked is here described as their being *debarred from their Lord*. They have no consciousness of the Higher Presence

16Then they will surely enter the burning Fire. 17Then it will be said: This is what you called a lie.

18 No, surely the record of the virtuous is in the highest places.[a] 19And what will make *y*ou know what the highest places are? 20It is a written book. 21Those drawn near (to Allah) witness it. 22Surely the virtuous are in bliss, 23on raised couches, gazing — 24*y*ou recognize in their faces the brightness of bliss. 25They are given to drink of a pure drink, sealed. 26The sealing of it is (with) musk. And for that let the aspirers aspire. 27And it is tempered with water coming from above [b] — 28a fountain from which drink those drawn near (to Allah).

29 Surely they who are guilty used to laugh at those who believe. 30And when they passed by them, they winked at one another, 31and when they returned to their people, they returned exulting. 32And when they saw them, they said: Surely these are in error — 33and they were not sent as keepers over them. 34So this day those who believe laugh at the disbelievers [c] — 35on raised couches, gazing. 36Surely the disbelievers are rewarded as they did.

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and, being thus debarred from their Lord in this life, enter the burning Fire in the next, as plainly stated in the verse that follows.

a **(18)** Like the prison of v. 7, these are not actual places. The *highest places* are the records of the best deeds, which enable man to soar high and cut off the chains which bind him to low desires.

b **(27)** The "water coming from above" (Arabic: *tasnīm*) signifies spiritually *the knowledge of Allah*, because it is from this source that those who are drawn near to Allah (v. 28) are made to drink.

c **(34)** The laughing of the believers is not to be taken literally. It signifies only *the brightness of hope in their faces*. The laughing in this case simply expresses a condition of joy which should make one laugh. The reversal of the condition of the believers and the disbelievers is all that is meant.

Chapter 84

Al-Inshiqāq The Bursting Apart

This chapter receives its title from the *bursting apart* of the heaven or the cloud mentioned in the first verse. The subject-matter is similar to that of the previous chapter. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 When the heaven bursts apart,[a] **2**and listens to its Lord and is made fit;[b] **3**and when the earth is stretched,[c] **4**and casts forth what is in it and becomes empty, **5**and listens to its Lord and is made fit. **6**O man, *y*ou must strive a hard striving (to attain) to *y*our Lord, until *y*ou meet Him.[d] **7**Then as to him who is given his book in his right hand, **8**his account will be taken by an easy reckoning, **9**and he will go back to his people rejoicing. **10**And as to him who is given his book behind his back, **11**he will call for (his own) destruction, **12**and enter into burning Fire. **13**Surely he was (formerly) joyful

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***a* (1)** Verses 1–5 speak of an ordinary phenomenon of nature, namely, the coming down of rain and the growth of vegetation, as a reference to the transformation which was to be brought about by the Divine revelation. The bursting apart of heaven here stands for the coming down of rain; compare 25:25: "And on the day when the heaven bursts apart with clouds".

***b* (2)** By the cloud or heaven listening to its Lord, and the earth listening to its Lord in v. 5, is meant their obedience to His commandment. In both cases it is added that they are made fit for listening to and obeying the Divine commandments, meaning that it is their very nature to be entirely submissive to the Divine commandments.

***c* (3)** The *stretching* of the earth signifies the same as its *stirring* and *swelling* in 22:5 and 41:39. The meaning is the *producing of vegetation*, and the expression here, as in those verses, signifies metaphorically that Divine revelation gives spiritual life to man. The meaning of the earth being stretched is explained in the next verse: *it casts forth what is in it and becomes empty*, i.e., the treasures of life latent within it are brought to light by the coming down of rain.

***d* (6)** This is the conclusion to which a consideration of the first five verses leads. Man must strive hard to attain to his Lord. Those who do this are ultimately joyful (v. 9), but those who give themselves up to the pleasures of this life (v. 13) shall afterwards be in a sad plight (v. 11).

among his people. [14]Surely he thought that he would never return (to Allah). [15]Indeed! — surely his Lord is ever Seer of him.

16 But no, I call to witness the sunset redness, [17]and the night and what it drives away, [18]and the moon when it grows full,[a] [19]that you shall certainly ascend to one state after another.[b]

20 But what is the matter with them that they do not believe? [21]And, when the Quran is recited to them, they do not adore (Him)? [22]No, those who disbelieve reject (it) — [23]and Allah knows best what they hide. [24]So announce to them a painful punishment, [25]except those who believe and do good — for them is a reward never to be cut off.

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a **(18)** Verses 16–18 draw attention to another phenomenon of nature, thereby indicating the departure of the power of the opponents of Truth. The *sunset redness* stands here for the disappearing sun of the power of the opponents, the night of adversity, which was now to overtake them, driving before it what vestige of light had remained. But they were not to remain submerged in darkness forever, for the moon (the Holy Prophet) had already made its appearance and would soon grow full, when the Arab nation was to march forth to conquer the world, the moon being a symbol of the power of the Arabs. For an alternative significance, see next note.

b **(19)** This verse can be taken to speak of the advancement of the cause of the Prophet (Bukhari, 65: *Surah* 84, ch. 2, hadith 4940). The people addressed here are thus the Muslims, who are told that they will go on making progress in the world, but it will be a gradual progress, and there may be setbacks. But the ultimate state would be one of triumph. In this case the night spoken of in the previous verse would mean the adversities which Islam itself will have to face, and the full moon would indicate its final triumph. The commentators also explain this verse as being a prophecy of the ultimate triumph of Islam.

Chapter 85

Al-Burūj The Stars

This chapter takes its title from the mention in the first verse of the heaven full of *stars,* which indicates that persons bearing the light of Islam will spread far and wide. The chapter refers to past history to show that those who persecute the believers will meet with destruction, as happened before. It is one of the very early revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By the heaven full of stars! **2**And the Promised day! **3**And the bearer of witness and that to which witness is borne![a] **4**Destruction overtake the companions of the trench![b] — **5**the fire fed with fuel, **6**when they sit by it, **7**and they are witnesses of what they do with the believers. **8**And they punished them for nothing except that they believed in Allah, the Mighty, the Praised, **9**Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Witness

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a **(3)** *Burūj* is the plural of *burj* which means *a tower* or *fortress* or *a sign of the Zodiac* or *a star* or *constellation*. Its root meaning is that of *becoming manifest* or *high*, and hence the various significations. As in 82:2 (see 82:4 footnote), the stars stand for the lesser lights, i.e., companions of the Prophet or the bearers of the message of Truth to people, in comparison with the sun to which the Prophet himself is likened (33:46). In *the heaven full of stars* there is thus a reference to the preachers of Truth, who will scatter far and wide. Hence the mention of the promised day in v. 2, the day of the triumph of Truth. The word *shāhid* (bearer of witness) here and *shahīd* elsewhere (see 4:41, etc.) both signify the Prophet. "That to which witness is borne" is the message of Truth, or it means those against whom the Prophet bears witness, i.e., the opponents of Truth.

b **(4)** The commentators give three different versions of the story supposed to be referred to in this verse, the best-known being that the reference is to the persecution of some Christians by Dhu Nawas, a king of Yaman, who was of the Jewish religion. One opinion holds that the reference may be to Nebuchadnezzar's casting Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:19–21). However, there may, as well, be a prophetical reference here to the great Arab army against which the Muslims were compelled to defend themselves by means of a trench, in what is called the Battle of the Allies or the Battle of the Ditch; see 33:9 footnote 1. The words of v. 7, and particularly of v. 10, clearly show that the reference here is to the enemies of the Holy Prophet, who persecuted the believing men and the believing women.

of all things. [10]Those who persecute believing men and believing women, then do not repent, theirs is the punishment of hell, and theirs the punishment of burning. [11]Those who believe and do good, theirs are Gardens in which rivers flow. That is the great achievement.

12 Surely the grip of *y*our Lord is severe. [13]Surely He it is Who creates first and reproduces; [14]and He is the Forgiving, the Loving, [15]Lord of the Throne of Power, the Glorious, [16]Doer of what He intends.

17 Has not the story come to *y*ou of the forces [18]of Pharaoh and Thamūd? [19]But those who disbelieve deny — [20]and Allah encompasses them on all sides. [21]Indeed, it is a glorious Quran, [22]in a guarded tablet.[a]

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a **(22)** The significance of these words is simply that the Quran is guarded against corruption and against the attacks of its opponents; compare 15:9: "Surely We have revealed the Reminder and surely We are its Guardian". There is no mention here or anywhere else in the Quran of the "guarded tablet" (*lauḥ maḥfūẓ*) on which the decrees of God are written; but even if the reference here be to it, the significance is still the same, namely, that the Quran shall be fully guarded.

Chapter 86

Al-Ṭāriq The Comer By Night

This chapter states how great were the difficulties which the Holy Prophet faced in bringing light to a benighted world, and in the first verse he is called *The Comer by Night;* hence the title. He is given comfort that a spiritual resurrection will be brought about. This chapter is among the earliest revelations. The reference at the close of the chapter to plans against the Holy Prophet may be prophetical.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By the heaven and the Comer by night! **2**And what will make *y*ou know what the Comer by night is? **3**The star of piercing brightness [a] — **4**there is not a soul but over it is a keeper.[b]

5 So let man consider of what he is created. **6**He is created of water pouring forth, **7**coming from between the back and the ribs.[c]

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a **(3)** *Ṭāriq* (from *ṭarq, striking a thing*) originally signifies *a comer by night*, because one who comes by night finds the doors shut, and knocking at the doors becomes necessary. The Comer by night is here the Holy Prophet; the revelation of the Quran is also spoken of as taking place on a blessed night (44:3, 97:1). The reason is that the Holy Prophet appeared when total darkness spread on the earth, and no one ever stood more in need of knocking at the doors which were shut against him and fastened with strong bolts. It is noteworthy that Jesus compares his advent to that of a *thief*: "…if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched… Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew, 24:43–44). It may be added that *Ṭāriq* is also the name given to the *morning star*, because it comes at the end of the night.

The Comer by night is called *the star of piercing brightness*, indicating that the Comer by night is a star of such resplendent brightness that all darkness will be dispelled before him.

b **(4)** Though the words are general, and signify that the deeds done by man are guarded so that he cannot escape their consequences, there is also a comfort for the Holy Prophet here that his opponents will not be able to harm him and that in time they will meet their doom. This is made clear at the end of the chapter.

c **(7)** *Water pouring forth* refers to sperms. The expression *between the back and the ribs* is a euphemism. A similar expression occurs in a saying of the Holy Prophet: "Whoever gives me a guarantee as to that which is between his two jaws

[8]Surely He is Able to return him (to life). [9]On the day when hidden things are manifested,[a] [10]then he will have no strength nor helper.

11 By the cloud giving rain, [12]and the earth opening (with vegetation)! [13]Surely it is a decisive word,[b] [14]and it is not a joke.

15 Surely they plan a plan, [16]and I plan a plan. [17]So grant the disbelievers a respite — let them alone for a while.[c]

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and that which is between his two feet, I guarantee for him paradise", the significance being the control of the tongue and the control of lust. (See Tirmidhi, 36:60, hadith 2408; Bukhari, 86:19, hadith 6807.)

a **(9)** Note this description of the day of Resurrection. The hidden things are the consequences of one's good or evil deeds, which will be made palpably manifest in the shape of Gardens and fruits or chains and Fire.

b **(13)** The *decisive word* is the Quran. Just as when rain comes down, the earth produces vegetation, so the coming of the Divine revelation is bound to raise a dead nation to life, and no efforts against it would hamper its progress. There is also a reference to the doom of the disbelievers in v. 10, in the words *he will have no strength nor helper*.

c **(17)** Whatever doubt there may be as to the significance of this chapter, it is dispelled by the last three verses, which speak of the plans of the opponents to exterminate Truth. The plan of God could not be frustrated, and the earth will receive life, but the Prophet is told to wait for a while. The same is true today.

Chapter 87

Al-A'lā The Most High

The title of this chapter is taken from the command to the Holy Prophet in the first verse to glorify his Lord, the word for "Lord" being *Rabb* meaning "nourisher to perfection", Who is also described here as *The Most High*. This indicates that the Holy Prophet himself would be raised to the highest position. The mention of the scriptures of Abraham and Moses in the final verse is to show not only that the Holy Quran agrees with previous scriptures in essential principles but also that those books contain prophecies about the Prophet Muhammad. This chapter is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Glorify the name of *y*our Lord, the Most High![a] **2**Who creates, then makes complete, **3**and Who measures, then guides,[b] **4**and Who brings forth vegetation, **5**then makes it dried up, dust-coloured.[c]

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a **(1)** This states that not only would the Holy Prophet be raised to the highest place to which man can rise, but everyone, through the glorification of God, can rise to the highest place to which he is capable of rising. Hence the order to glorify *The Most High* is immediately followed by the words that He not only creates and makes complete but has also ordained a measure for everyone and He guides everyone to this goal.

b **(3)** Verses 2 and 3 speak of four Divine acts: *creation*, *completion*, *measuring*, and *guiding*. Everything in this universe is subject to these four laws, and so is man. He is created from a very humble and low beginning, his first condition being that of a life-germ which cannot be seen. Then it develops gradually to complete human form. This is the subject-matter of v. 2. The third verse then lays down that everything in creation is held under control: it is made according to a measure and its progress lies along a certain line; and that it is God Who guides it or makes it walk along that line. The whole is in special reference to the spiritual advancement of man through Divine glorification.

c **(5)** Vegetation, too, receives life but there is no higher purpose in its creation beyond the fact that it serves to sustain man; so it dries up. But there is a higher purpose in the creation of man; and it is to fulfil that purpose that God sends His revelation, which is spoken of in the next verse.

6 We shall make *y*ou recite so *y*ou shall not forget — **7**except what Allah please.[a] Surely He knows the manifest and what is hidden. **8**And We shall make *y*our way smooth to a state of ease.[b] **9**So remind, reminding indeed benefits.[c] **10**He who fears will be mindful, **11**and the most unfortunate one will avoid it, **12**who will burn in the great Fire. **13**Then he will neither die in it, nor live.[d]

14 He indeed is successful who purifies himself, **15**and remembers the name of his Lord, then prays. **16**But you prefer the life of this world, **17**while the Hereafter is better and more lasting. **18**Surely this is in the earlier scriptures, **19**the scriptures of Abraham and Moses.[e]

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a **(7)** Man is apt to forget, and the Prophet was a human being and he too was apt to forget. But he never forgot a word of the Divine revelation which came to him. He sometimes received long chapters on a single occasion, but the whole was so deeply impressed on his mind that once it was read out to him by the Holy Spirit, he repeated it without forgetting a word of it. Still more difficult was his task when chapters were received piecemeal. The reference in *what Allah please* is not to Divine revelation which the Prophet never forgot, but to other things which he forgot as a human being.

b **(8)** The words predict the Holy Prophet's triumph and the removal of the distress in which Islam was.

c **(9)** The Arabic word *in* here means *indeed* and not *if.* There are numerous instances of this in the Quran as well as in Arabic prose and poetry.

d **(13)** There is no *life* in hell, for life is only for the righteous; neither is there *death*, because death signifies a state of complete rest.

e **(19)** The preference of the good of the Hereafter to the transitory advantage of this life is the one great truth preached by all prophets. There is also a reference here to the prophecies concerning the Holy Prophet which are to be found in the revelation granted respectively to Abraham and to Moses; see 2:124 footnote and 2:41 footnote. Or, the essential principles of religion are meant, which are common to all the great religions.

Chapter 88

Al-Ghāshiyah

The Overwhelming Event

The *Overwhelming Event,* whose mention in the first verse supplies the name of this chapter, is the doom of the opponents in this life and their punishment in the Hereafter. The date of revelation is placed about the fourth year of the Holy Prophet's mission.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Has the news come to *y*ou of the Overwhelming Event?[a] **2**Faces on that day will be downcast, **3**labouring, toiling, **4**entering burning Fire, **5**made to drink from a boiling spring. **6**They will have no food but of thorns, **7**neither nourishing nor satisfying hunger. **8**Faces on that day will be happy, **9**glad for their striving, **10**in a lofty Garden, **11**in which *y*ou will hear no vain talk. **12**In it there is a fountain flowing. **13**In it there are thrones raised high, **14**and drinking-cups ready placed, **15**and cushions set in rows, **16**and carpets spread out.

17 Do they not see the clouds,[b] how they are created? **18**And the heaven, how it is raised high? **19**And the mountains, how they are fixed? **20**And the earth, how it is spread out? **21**So remind. *Y*ou are one to remind only. **22***Y*ou are not a warder over them — **23**but whoever turns back and disbelieves, **24**Allah will punish him with the greatest punishment. **25**Surely to Us is their return. **26**Then it is for Us to call them to account.

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a **(1)** The Overwhelming Event is no doubt the Resurrection, but the overwhelming event of this life is the doom of the opponents of Truth. The description of the two parties that follows applies to an utterly discomfited and disappointed enemy and to the faithful in the hour of their triumph.

b **(17)** *Ibil* also means *clouds that bear the water for rain*. This significance suits the context better than the usual rendering, the *camels.* The mention of the clouds along with the heavens, where they exist, and with mountains, which cool the vapours so that they pour down water, and the earth, which benefits by that water, is in accordance with what is said in many other places.

Chapter 89

Al-Fajr The Daybreak

The important *Daybreak* mentioned in the first verse, after which this chapter is named, is the first morning of the month of *Dhu-l-Ḥijjah,* the month of the pilgrimage, because this institution had given Makkah great importance as a trade centre and brought material prosperity to its residents. A warning is given here of the punishment that must overtake the city, as punishment overtook earlier people. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By the daybreak! **2**And the ten nights! **3**And the even and the odd! **4**And the night when it departs![a] **5**Truly in this is an oath for those who have understanding. **6**Have *y*ou not considered how *y*our Lord dealt with Ād, **7**(of) Iram,[b] having lofty buildings, **8**whose like were not created in the land; **9**and (with) Thamūd, who carved out rocks in the valley (to make houses); **10**and Pharaoh, the lord of armies, **11**who exceeded limits in the cities, **12**and made great mischief in them? **13**So *y*our Lord poured on them a portion of punishment.[c]

14 Surely *y*our Lord is Watchful. **15**As for man, when his Lord tries him, so (that) He gives him honour and favours him, he says: My Lord honours me. **16**But when He tries him, so (that) He

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a **(4)** There is a great variety of opinion as to what is meant by *the daybreak, the ten nights*, and *the even and the odd*. The reference may be to the importance attached to Makkah (which is mentioned as *The City* at the commencement of the next chapter), because it was not only the spiritual centre of Arabia, but had also become its trade centre, on account of pilgrims resorting to it from all parts of Arabia. *The daybreak* would thus signify the daybreak of the first of the month of *Dhu-l-Ḥijjah; the ten nights* would stand for the first ten nights of that month, the tenth day being the day of sacrifices. The *even* may refer to the creation, which consists of pairs (51:49), and the *odd* to the Creator Who is one. The whole is a warning to the people of Makkah that, if they do not heed the warning, their end will be the same as the end of previous rejectors of truth.

b **(7)** *Iram* or *Aram* may be the name of the grandfather of Ād, from whom the tribe took its name or the name of a city in which it lived.

c **(13)** The meaning is that they received a portion of the punishment here, greater punishment overtaking them after death.

restricts for him his (means of) subsistence, he says: My Lord has disgraced me.[a] [17]No, but you do not honour the orphan, [18]nor do you urge one another to feed the poor,[b] [19]and you devour heritage, devouring all,[c] [20]and you love wealth with exceeding love.

21 No indeed! When the earth is made to crumble to pieces, [22]and *y*our Lord comes with the angels, ranks on ranks; [23]and hell is made to appear that day. On that day man will be mindful, and of what use will being mindful be then? [24]He will say: I wish I had sent (good deeds) ahead for this life of mine! [25]But none can punish as He will punish on that day. [26]And none can bind as He will bind on that day.[d]

27 O soul at rest! [28]Return to *y*our Lord, well-pleased (with Him), well-pleasing (Him), [29]so enter among My servants, [30]and enter My Garden![e]

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a **(16)** God tries man both by granting him affluence, in which case he is puffed up with pride and says that his wealth is an indication that God honours him, and by poverty, in which case he thinks that God has disgraced him.

b **(18)** Verses 17–19 show how the Prophet felt for the orphans, the poor and the weak, so much so that he warns his powerful and wealthy opponents that their indifference to the orphans and the poor and their injustice to the weak will bring down upon them the Divine judgment, which will shatter their power. He remained, to the end, a true well-wisher of the weak and the oppressed. When he became the head of a State, he provided for the orphans and the poor out of the public funds; see 9:60.

c **(19)** Among the Arabs, women and young children were not allowed to have any share in the inheritance, because they could not fight the enemy.

d **(26)** These words indicate the severity of the punishment.

e **(30)** Verses 27–30 refer to the highest stage of the spiritual development of man, the stage in which he *rests contented* with his Lord. At this last stage, the pure and perfect sincerity, truth and righteousness of a person are rewarded by Almighty God by granting him a heaven on this earth. It is at this stage too that a person realizes that the prayers and worship which at first appeared to him as a burden are really a nourishment on which the growth of his soul depends, and that this is the basis of his spiritual development.

Chapter 90

Al-Balad The City

The City spoken of in the first verse, from which this chapter receives its name, is Makkah, which in the last chapter was warned of punishment overtaking it. But it was to be the spiritual centre of the whole world, when Muslims would be made free from all obligations in it, as stated in the second verse. The second half of the chapter speaks of the importance of attempting the uphill struggle for the service of humanity, which marks a great nation. It is one of the earliest revelations, assigned to the first year of the Holy Prophet's mission.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 No, I call to witness this City![a] **2**And *y*ou will be made free from obligation in this City[b] — **3**and the father and the offspring he produced![c] **4**We have certainly created man to face difficulties.[d] **5**Does he think that no one has power over him? **6**He will say: I have wasted much wealth.[e] **7**Does he think that no one sees him?

8 Have We not given him two eyes, **9**and a tongue and two lips, **10**and pointed out to him the two conspicuous ways?[f] **11**But he does not attempt the uphill road. **12**And what will make *y*ou comprehend what the uphill road is? **13**(It is) to free a slave, **14**or to feed in a day of hunger **15**an orphan near of kin, **16**or the poor man lying in the dust.[g] **17**Then he is of those who believe and exhort one another to patience, and exhort one another to mercy. **18**These are the people of the right hand. **19**And those who disbelieve in Our messages, they are the people of the left hand. **20**On them is Fire closed over.

***a* (1)** By *this City* is meant Makkah. Thousands of years before, Abraham had prayed for a city to be raised in that wilderness where he had left one branch of his descendants (14:37), and for a Prophet to be raised among them (2:129).

***b* (2)** The translation here is in accordance with the true significance of the word *ḥill*, meaning *being free from obligation or responsibility with respect to something*. The statement is prophetical, indicating that the Prophet would be made free from obligation in respect to the sacredness of the territory of Makkah, being allowed to enter it by force, as he did at the conquest of Makkah, to which, in fact, the words refer.

c **(3)** The *father* is none other than Abraham, the progenitor of the Arabs, and by *the offspring he produced* is meant either Ishmael, who assisted Abraham in raising the foundations of the Sacred House at Makkah, or the Holy Prophet himself, who was the object of Abraham's prayer.

d **(4)** The advancement of man, *even physically*, lies along a path of hard struggle. The same is the case in the sphere of the spiritual advancement of man. Abraham suffered great hardships in the cause of Truth; and so must the Prophet now, in order to bring about a spiritual awakening in the world. It is only a long and hard struggle on the part of certain benefactors of humanity that makes man's advancement possible, physically as well as spiritually.

e **(6)** The opponents, after spending all their wealth for the extermination of Truth, would find that the cause of Truth was triumphant, and would then say that they really wasted their wealth in a wrong cause.

f **(10)** The *two conspicuous ways* are *the ways of truth and falsehood in word* or *good and evil in deed*. The *two eyes* (v. 8) enable him to distinguish good from evil, while with *the tongue and the lips* (v. 9) he can ask, if he cannot see for himself.

g **(16)** The service of humanity, along with the service of God, is the one topic of these earliest revelations. The doing of good to the oppressed, the poor, and the orphans is called an uphill road or a high mountain because of the difficulty of doing it. The constant reference to the helping of the poor and the orphans and the setting free of slaves brings to light the real character of the Prophet, who is described by one knowing him most intimately as *one who earned for those who had no means themselves* (Bukhari, 1: hadith 3). No religion has laid so much stress on the uplift of the poor and the distressed as Islam, and it is the only religion which enjoins the duty of granting freedom to slaves, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the only founder of a religion who showed the noble example of freeing all slaves that he ever had and helping in the freeing of others. The latest revelation in 9:60 contains plain directions to the State itself to spend a part of the public funds in purchasing freedom for slaves.

Chapter 91

Al-Shams The Sun

The Holy Prophet is the *Sun* of righteousness, the word in the first verse after which this chapter is named. With the rising of this sun, the way to perfection is pointed out to man. But only those who purify themselves are really successful, while those who give themselves over to corruption meet with failure, as illustrated by the case of Thamūd. It is one of the earliest revelations, like the last chapter.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By the sun and its brightness![a] **2**And the moon when it borrows light from it! **3**And the day when it exposes it to view! **4**And the night when it draws a veil over it![b] **5**And the heaven and its make! **6**And the earth and its extension! **7**And the soul and its perfection![c] — **8**So He reveals to it its way of evil and its way of good;[d] **9**he is indeed successful who causes it to grow, **10**and he indeed fails who buries it.[e]

11 Thamūd rejected (the truth) in their inordinacy,[f] **12**when the most wretched one among them broke forth with mischief — **13**so Allah's messenger said to them: (Leave alone) Allah's she-camel, and (give) her (to) drink. **14**But they called him a liar and slaughtered her. So their Lord destroyed them for their sin and levelled them (with the ground); **15**and He does not fear its consequence.[g]

***a* (1)** This is to show that the spiritual light of the Prophet will brighten as time passes on.

***b* (4)** In the words "exposes it" (v. 3) and "draws a veil over it" (v. 4), the pronoun *it* refers to *the world.*

***c* (7)** The mention of the perfection of the soul of man in this verse is a sequel to what is stated in the first six verses. Man is here spoken of as possessing the highest of qualities which are met with in nature. The sun is a source of light, even so is the perfect man a source of spiritual light. The moon borrows the light of the sun, even so is the perfect man, whose light is really borrowed from the Divine source, which is the real source of all light. The day makes things manifest and thus enables man to carry on his struggle, while the night casts a veil over light and brings rest; the perfect man possesses both these qualities, as he carries

on a very hard struggle for the attainment of great ends, and at the same time his mind is at rest and he possesses the quality of contentment. The heaven is raised high, and the earth is spread out for people to walk over, being thus a manifestation of humility; the perfect man possesses both these qualities, having the highest of aspirations and being at the same time humble and lowly. The perfect man thus possesses the opposite qualities of giving light and receiving light, severe exertion and complete rest, greatness and humility. These qualities were possessed by the Holy Prophet, who invited others to make the same the goal of their lives.

d **(8)** The verse is a fitting sequel to the statement made in the previous verse as regards the perfection of the soul, as it points out the way to perfection. It is through Divine inspiration, or revelation, that the soul is made perfect, because Divine revelation makes clear the two ways, *the way of evil* and *the way of good*. It is by avoiding the former and walking in the latter that perfection can be attained.

e **(10)** The words for "causes it to grow" (*zakkā-hā*) and "buries it" (*dassā-hā*) also have the secondary meaning of *purifies it* and *corrupts it* respectively. The adoption of these two words really indicates that the faculties necessary for perfection are given to everyone, but there are some who make them thrive by their development and others who corrupt them by allowing them to remain concealed, not displaying them to their advantage.

f **(11)** The verse gives an instance of those whose end is failure on account of the corrupt manner of their lives, giving at the same time a warning to people that, if they continued in their evil course and did not turn to righteousness, following the call of the Prophet, their end would be the same. If they followed the Prophet, they would attain to perfection, but, if they went against him, they would be given over to destruction as were the former people.

g **(15)** Allah does not care for the consequences of the punishment to a people when they are found deserving of such punishment, for through their destruction comes life to humanity.

Chapter 92

Al-Lail The Night

The object of this chapter is to show that *The Night* of disbelief and ignorance, indicated in the first verse, will give place to the light of the day. It tells us that while people are striving after different ends, those who strive for good and charitable works will have their path eased for them but those who go after evil will find themselves in distress. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By the night when it draws a veil! **2**And the day when it shines! **3**And the creating of the male and the female! — **4**Your striving is surely (for) diverse (ends).[a] **5**Then as for him who gives (charitably) and keeps his duty, **6**and accepts what is good — **7**We facilitate for him (the way to) ease. **8**And as for him who is miserly and considers himself self-sufficient, **9**and rejects what is good — **10**We facilitate for him (the way to) distress. **11**And his wealth will not avail him when he perishes.[b]

12 Surely Ours is it to show the way, **13**and surely Ours is the Hereafter and the former.[c] **14**So I warn you of the Fire that flames. **15**None will enter it but the most unfortunate, **16**who rejects and turns (his) back. **17**And away from it shall be kept the most faithful to duty, **18**who gives his wealth, purifying himself. **19**And none has with him any favour for a reward, **20**except the seeking of the pleasure of his Lord, the Most High.[d] **21**And he will soon be well-pleased.

***a* (4)** Evil is here compared with the darkness of the night and good with the light of day. The creation of the male and the female, which stands for the creation of the whole of animate nature, because all living beings are created either male or female, is also a witness to the same truth, for there we find everyone striving for an end, and everyone reaping according to the manner of his striving.

***b* (11)** The two examples given in these verses represent those who accept and those who reject the Truth, respectively; the one goes on doing good deeds, finding his way quite easy, until he finds himself in ease, and the other goes on doing evil, the doing of which seems easy to him, until he finds himself in distress.

***c* (13)** The wicked one is here told that he will find himself in distress not only in the *Hereafter* but also in *this life,* as God has control of both. Or the two words refer to what is coming later, i.e. what is promised, and the present state.

***d* (20)** The pleasure of the Lord is the only favour for which a person should hope, and hence this is the goal of a Muslim's life — his paradise in this as well as the next life. This is in accordance with what is said in 9:72, one of the latest revelations: "And greatest of all is Allah's goodly pleasure. That is the mighty achievement."

Chapter 93

Al-Ḍuḥā The Brightness of the Day

This chapter draws attention to the gradual spreading of the light of the sun of Islam, and thus has the title *The Brightness of the Day,* the word in the first verse. The last two chapters speak of the coming of the Holy Prophet as the rising of the sun. This shows that as sunshine is not fully resplendent immediately after the rising of the sun, so would Truth shine in its full brightness gradually. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By the brightness of the day! **2**And the night when it is still! — **3***Y*our Lord has not forsaken *y*ou, nor is He displeased.[a] **4**And surely the later state is better for *y*ou than the earlier. **5**And soon will *y*our Lord give *y*ou so that *y*ou will be well pleased.[b]

6 Did He not find *y*ou an orphan and give (*y*ou) shelter?[c] **7**And find *y*ou groping, so He showed the way?[d] **8**And find *y*ou in want, so He enriched *y*ou?[e] **9**Therefore the orphan, do not oppress.[f] **10**And him who asks, do not rebuke.[g] **11**And the favour of *y*our Lord, do proclaim.[h]

***a* (3)** These words may be taken as words of solace in a general sense, the significance being that God would never forsake the Holy Prophet. But in the light of what follows, the words are prophetical, the indication being that in its later history Islam would have to face setbacks which might give rise to such doubts. The Prophet and his followers are therefore given an assurance that God will never forsake the cause of Islam. Force is lent to this interpretation by the fact that here it is not the night that is followed by the brightness of the day, which was the case at the appearance of the Prophet, but the brightness of the day is followed by the stillness of the night, which seems to be a reference to the inactivity of the Muslim people after the sun had shone, i.e., in later times.

***b* (5)** The words may mean that as time passes, the Prophet's cause would go on gaining strength, and the later state would always be better for him than the earlier. Or, the reference here is to the second rising of Islam, after what is called the stillness of the night in v. 2, a long pause of inactivity of the Muslims. References to a setback to the cause of Islam for a long period are very frequent in the Quran; see 32:5 footnote. As a matter of fact, it is true that despite various setbacks at different periods of its history, the cause of Islam has gone on gaining ground.

c **(6)** Abdullah, the Holy Prophet's father, died about three months before the Prophet was born; his mother, Āminah, died when he was six years old. His grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, who took care of him after his mother, died two years later, and from that time he remained in the charge of Abu Talib, his uncle, who was alive when the Holy Prophet received the Divine message for the regeneration of mankind.

d **(7)** The word *ḍāll* ("groping") here signifies one who is *unable to see the way for himself*, and not one who is *in error.* See also 53:2 footnote. Verses 6, 7 and 8 stand in close relation to verses 9, 10 and 11 respectively. Verse 6 tells the Prophet that he was himself an orphan, and v. 9 draws the conclusion that he should therefore not oppress the orphan; similarly, v. 8 speaks of the Divine favour to him in making him free from want, and v. 11 draws the conclusion that he should therefore proclaim the Divine favour to him. The same applies between v. 7 and v. 10. The latter plainly speaks of one who asks to be guided to the Truth. The Holy Prophet was no doubt "one who asks" (*sā'il*) in this sense. He did not worship idols, but neither could he, without the help of Allah, find out the way for the regeneration of his people, for which his soul yearned so eagerly. The word *ḍāll* also signifies *one who becomes lost,* and the meaning may be that the Holy Prophet had so devoted himself to the quest of the right way for the world that he had lost himself in that quest. See also the introductory note to ch. 94.

e **(8)** Finding the Holy Prophet in want, and enriching him, do not refer to his temporal or financial circumstances only, if they refer to them at all, but rather to his spiritual needs and the spiritual wealth with which he was enriched.

f **(9)** Not taking care of the orphans is really their oppression.

g **(10)** The reference is to one who asks *about knowledge.* This interpretation is corroborated by the incident related in the opening verses of ch. 80.

h **(11)** *The favour* is no other than *revelation*, the greatest of all Divine favours, as it is recognized to be throughout the Quran. This was the favour which the Holy Prophet continued to announce throughout his life.

Chapter 94

Al-Inshirāḥ The Expansion

This chapter, like the ones before, comforts the Holy Prophet. His difficulties would soon be followed by ease, as his breast was *opened* or *expanded* to receive the Truth; hence the title. The great burden, which almost broke his back, meaning his deep anxiety for humanity, was removed by Divine revelation. This chapter is as a supplement to the preceding one. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Have We not expanded for *y*ou *y*our breast (with Divine light),[a] **2**and removed from *y*ou *y*our burden, **3**which weighed down *y*our back,[b] **4**and exalted for *y*ou *y*our mention?[c] **5**Surely with difficulty is ease, **6**with difficulty is surely ease.[d] **7**So when *y*ou are free (from anxiety), work hard,[e] **8**and make *y*our Lord *y*our exclusive object.

***a* (1)** The *expanding of the breast* is also mentioned in Moses' prayer in 20:25: "My Lord, expand my breast for me". In 6:125 it is stated: "So whomsoever Allah intends to guide, He expands his breast for Islam". The expanding of the breast signifies its illumination with wisdom and Divine light, and filling with tranquillity. It stands for the greatness of the heart of the Holy Prophet.

***b* (3)** The burden which *weighed down his back* signifies anxiety for raising humanity from the ignorance and superstition in which it was involved. Compare 26:3: "Perhaps you will kill yourself with grief because they do not believe". The *removal* of the burden signifies giving relief from anxiety.

***c* (4)** This is a clear prophecy of the glorious eminence to which the Holy Prophet was to be raised, uttered at a time when he was alone and unknown.

***d* (6)** The *ease* refers to the *ultimate triumph*, and the *difficulty* to *the trials* which the Holy Prophet was then undergoing. But the passage as well reveals a general law of nature that difficulty is followed by ease.

***e* (7)** The Prophet's being *free* signifies his *freedom from anxiety*, in reference to what is said in the previous verse. Being now free from all anxiety, he was to work hard for the regeneration of a fallen humanity, and make his Lord his exclusive object, i.e., apply himself wholly to establish the greatness of God.

Chapter 95

Al-Tīn The Fig

This chapter draws a comparison between the Mosaic system — of which the *fig* is a symbol, providing the name of this chapter — and the Islamic system to show that man can rise to the highest degree of eminence by following and acting on the right principles, and he degrades himself to the lowest if he is not guided by the right principles, or being so guided, he fails to act upon them. The chapter belongs to the same early period as those preceding it.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By the fig and the olive! **2**And mount Sinai! **3**And this city made secure![a] — **4**Certainly We created man in the best make. **5**Then We reduce him to the lowest of the low, **6**except those who believe and do good — so theirs is a reward never to be cut off.[b] **7**So who can belie *y*ou after (this) about the Judgment? **8**Is not Allah the Best of the judges?[c]

***a* (3)** The *fig* and the *olive* stand respectively for *the law given on Mount Sinai* and *that revealed in the sacred city of Makkah.* A comparison between Moses and the Holy Prophet Muhammad is introduced in very early revelations, as here and in 52:1–6 and 73:15. The incident of Jesus approaching a fig tree, and, upon finding no fruit on it, cursing it and the tree withering away (Matthew, 21:18–19), symbolised the passing away of the law given on Mount Sinai. The olive is compared here with the law of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. This is explained by a later revelation according to which the light of Islam is "lit from a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western" (24:35). The comparison shows that, whereas the law given on Mount Sinai passed away like the fig tree in Jesus' parable, the new light, lit from the blessed olive tree, was never to be extinguished, because it belonged neither to the East nor to the West, but was meant for all mankind in all ages.

***b* (6)** By man's being created *in the best make* is meant *his enormous capability for advancement.* When he does not take advantage of the opportunity offered to him, he is reduced to the lowest of the low. With unthought of advancement in science, people are even today flying at each other's throats like the beasts of the jungle, because they are not guided by Divine revelation.

***c* (8)** The Judgment is as well a judgment of the guilty in this life as in the next.

Chapter 96

Al-'Alaq The Clot

The first five verses of this chapter are by universal admission the first revelation which the Holy Prophet received. The chapter is entitled *The Clot* as the second verse states that God created man from *a clot* of blood, which contains a hint that, as a beautiful human form is developed out of such a humble origin, even so the Holy Prophet would raise humanity to the greatest eminence morally and spiritually.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Read in the name of *y*our Lord Who creates [a] — **2**creates man from a clot (of blood). [b] **3**Read and *y*our Lord is most Generous,[c] **4**Who taught by the pen,[d] **5**taught man what he did not know.

6 No! — man is surely inordinate, **7**because he looks upon himself as self-sufficient.[e] **8**Surely to *y*our Lord is the return.

9 Have *y*ou seen him who forbids **10**a servant when he prays?[f] **11**Do *y*ou see if he is on the right way, **12**or enjoins observance of duty? **13**Do *y*ou see if he denies and turns away? **14**Does he not know that Allah sees? **15**No! If he does not stop, We will seize him by the forelock[g] — **16**a lying, sinful forelock! **17**Then let him summon his council, **18**We will summon the braves of the army.[h] **19**No! Do not obey him, but prostrate *y*ourself, and draw near (to Allah).

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a **(1)** The Arabs were a people who rarely made use of reading and writing, and the Prophet himself did not know reading or writing, yet the very first revelation which he received was a command *to read*. The significance of this order is expressed in v. 3, v. 2 being parenthetical as referring to the origin of man. The order to *read* is repeated in v. 3, adding that *your Lord is most Generous,* to show that it is through reading and writing that man can attain to a position of glory, while v. 4 says that it is by the use of the pen that knowledge can be acquired. The words *in the name of your Lord* signify *by the help of your Lord*. The use of the word *Rabb* (*Nourisher to perfection*), translated as *Lord,* shows that revelation was being granted to the Prophet, to bring him, and through him the whole of humanity, to perfection.

b **(2)** *'Alaq* signifies *a clot of blood* as well as *attachment* and *love*. The former significance is the one generally adopted, because of the mention of

'alaqah in the process of the creation of man in other places in the Quran, and it indicates the insignificance of man's origin. Having regard to the other significance of *'alaq*, the words may, however, also be translated as meaning *created man out of love*. The Prophet is reported to have said: *I (God) loved that I should be known, so I created man*.

c **(3)** The word *Akram* means *Generous* as well as *Honourable.* It has been used here in reference to the great goal of honour and glory which the Prophet was destined to attain.

d **(4)** The mention of the *pen* in this, the very first, revelation of the Holy Prophet is significant, and it not only indicates the help for propagating knowledge of Islam which the Holy Prophet was to find in the *pen,* but signifies as well that the pen should be specially used in guarding the revelation which was to be granted to the Holy Prophet. It is a fact that the pen has played an important part in the propagation of Islam as well as in the protection of the Quran against corruption of every sort. The frequent mention of writing and the pen in the Quran, and particularly in connection with the revelation of the Holy Prophet, is rather striking when it is borne in mind that not only was the use of writing a rare novelty in the Arabian peninsula, but the Prophet was himself unacquainted with writing and reading.

e **(7)** Man becomes inordinate or rebellious because he thinks himself to be self-sufficient, and free from all need of God Who breathed into him of His Spirit. The soul of man has in fact a mystic relation with the invisible Divine Spirit, which the materialist fails to realize.

f **(10)** So great was the opposition that the Prophet and his companions could not say their prayers in a public place.

g **(15)** Seizing by the forelock signifies *abasement*.

h **(18)** The significance of verses 17–18 is that they should take their decision unitedly and do their utmost against the Prophet and his message. The two verses thus clearly speak prophetically of the battles in which the mighty men of both sides were to be brought into conflict.

Chapter 97

Al-Qadr The Majesty

The very first revelation of the Holy Quran in ch. 96 is suitably followed in arrangement by this chapter which relates when the revelation began. It was on the *Night of Majesty,* one of the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan, after which this chapter is named. Its coming on that night indicated that the most majestic of all revelations was now being granted to the world and that the majesty of this revelation, as well as of its recipient, would be established in the world. The chapter is unquestionably one of the very earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Surely We revealed it on the Night of Majesty.[a] **2**And what will make *y*ou comprehend what the Night of Majesty is? **3**The Night of Majesty is better than a thousand months.[b] **4**The angels and the Spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord, for every affair.[c] **5**Peace! — it is till the rising of the morning.[d]

***a* (1)** *Lailat al-Qadr*, literally *the Night of Majesty* or *Grandeur* or *Greatness*, is a well-known night in the last ten days of the month of Ramadan, being more probably the 25th or 27th or 29th night of the month. See 44:3 where it is called *the blessed night.* From 2:185, it appears that the Quran was revealed in the month of Ramadan, and from the above it appears to have been revealed on the *Lailat al-Qadr*; by revelation of course being meant the commencement of its revelation, because the whole was revealed in portions during twenty-three years; and the word "Quran" is applicable as well to a portion as to the whole. That the reference is here to the commencement of the revelation is also clear from the arrangement of the chapters, the opening verses of the last chapter being admittedly the first revelation to the Prophet. In fact, *Lailat al-Qadr* owes its importance to the fact that it was on this night that the most blessed and perfect of all revelations was given to the world. Moses' fasting for forty days before receiving revelation (Exodus, 34:28), and Jesus' keeping fast for the same number of days before he began preaching (Matthew, 4:2), show that Divine blessings are associated with fasting. Hence Muslims are required to fast every year for thirty days, and special Divine blessings are promised to them in the last days of the fasts.

***b* (3)** A thousand months may be taken as the equivalent of a very long time. Numerically they are equal to about 83 years, leaving 17 years to complete a century. There is a saying of the Holy Prophet according to which a *mujaddid*, or a *reformer*, will appear among the Muslims at the commencement of every century. The *Lailat al-Qadr* being a time of great spiritual blessing may also

signify the time during which the Prophet worked in person, being actually a period of twenty-three years, or the time during which a *mujaddid* would ordinarily work, which period is more blessed spiritually than the rest of the century. (*Editor's Note:* A thousand months may represent the period of a person's lifetime. In an entire lifetime, but spent without Divine light, he cannot find the deep Divine truths, nor make the moral and spiritual progress, that he can by even a short contact with the spiritual blessings that descend with a man appointed by Allah.)

c **(4)** The Spirit here may signify the Divine Spirit, which is really the force through which the regeneration of humanity is brought about, or it may mean Divine inspiration. The descent of the angels and the Spirit also shows that *Lailat al-Qadr*, as hinted at in the last note, has a deeper significance, for though a particular night in the month of Ramadan may be characterized by great Divine blessings, it is more especially in connection with the mission of one appointed by Allah for the regeneration of the world that "the angels and the Spirit" come down from heaven, turning people's minds to the spiritual values of life. See also 44:3 footnote.

d **(5)** "Peace" is the distinctive mark of *Lailat al-Qadr*. This *peace* comes to the hearts of the true devotees in the form of a tranquillity of mind which makes them fit to receive Divine blessings. But it is also through one commissioned by God that the basis of peace among people is laid.

Chapter 98

Al-Bayyinah The Clear Evidence

The Holy Prophet, who received the mightiest of revelations, or that revelation itself, is here called *The Clear Evidence*. This revelation contained all the pure and essential teachings of previous scriptures, as stated in v. 3. It may not be a very early revelation but there seems no doubt that it belongs to the Makkah period.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book and the idolaters could not have been freed till clear evidence came to them[a] — **2**a Messenger from Allah, reciting pure pages,[b] **3**in which are (all) right books.[c] **4**Nor did those to whom the Book was given become divided till clear evidence came to them.[d] **5**And they are enjoined nothing but to serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience, upright, and to keep up prayer and give the due charity, and that is the right religion.

6 Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book and the idolaters will be in the Fire of hell, abiding in it. They are the worst of creatures. **7**Those who believe and do good, they are the best of creatures. **8**Their reward is with their Lord: Gardens of perpetuity in which rivers flow, abiding in them forever. Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him. That is for him who fears his Lord.[e]

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a **(1)** Both the People of the Book, people to whom revelation had been granted at some previous time, and the idolaters of Arabia, among whom no prophet had ever appeared, were sunk so deep in immorality and sin that only a Divine Messenger could now free them from this bondage. The Jews and the Christians, one after another, had exerted themselves to their utmost to reform Arabia, but both had failed. In fact they were themselves demoralized like the Arabs. That by the clear evidence is meant the Prophet is made clear in the next verse, where this clear evidence is spoken of as being a *Messenger from Allah*.

b **(2)** It should be noted that the Messenger is here described as reciting pure *pages*, thus showing clearly that the Quran existed in a written form at the time of the revelation of this chapter. Their designation as *pure* is to show that the Quran brought them out of all impurities.

c **(3)** *Kitāb* (occurring here in the plural, *kutub*) means a *book* or an *ordinance.* Whichever significance may be adopted, the meaning of the passage is that all those right directions necessary for the guidance of people, whether previously revealed or not, are to be met with in the Quran. The Quran thus claims to contain all the good points of other sacred books, and, in addition, to supply their deficiencies.

d **(4)** The division mentioned here is the division into believers and disbelievers, some accepting the Messenger and others rejecting him.

e **(8)** The companions of the Holy Prophet are here spoken of as having attained to the highest spiritual stage; compare 89:27–30, where the same words occur regarding spiritual perfection; see 89:30 footnote. This shows clearly that they were above all worldly motives, and not only joined Islam with the single object of *pleasing God* but also that their sincerity was above all reproach to the end, so that *God was pleased with them* and made them enter His Garden.

Chapter 99

Al-Zilzāl The Shaking

The title of this chapter, *Shaking,* occurs in the first verse which hints at the severe shaking destined to bring about a transformation first in Arabia and later on in the whole world. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 When the earth is shaken with her shaking, **2**and the earth brings forth her burdens, **3**and man says: What has happened to her? **4**On that day she will tell her news, **5**as if *y*our Lord had revealed to her.[a] **6**On that day people will come forth, in diverse bodies, that they may be shown their works. **7**So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. **8**And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.[b]

***a* (5)** The first verse speaks of a violent shaking of the earth. That such a shaking would take place at the Resurrection cannot be denied. That it took place in the Holy Prophet's lifetime is a fact. This was the shaking which brought about that wonderful transformation in Arabia, and then in the whole world, which is spoken of in the last chapter. The second verse speaks of the earth as bringing forth her burdens. This has been taken as signifying both the bringing forth of the dead and the yielding of her hidden treasures. How the earth is bringing forth her hidden treasures of mineral wealth shows the wonderful knowledge of the future disclosed in the Quran. That these are the preliminaries of a great transformation is the one theme of these early revelations. The transformation brought about in the Prophet's lifetime was in fact the first stage in the greater transformation to be brought about in the whole world later on. Verses 3–5 indicate that, at the happenings referred to in the first two verses, man will wonder and cry out, *What has happened to the earth*? This shows that extraordinary happenings will be witnessed by man in this very life. The earth will *tell her news*, that is to say, great secrets hitherto unknown will be revealed. This is further stressed in v. 5, *as if your Lord had revealed to her*. In other words, as revelation discloses things which are unknown to man, so will great secrets hitherto unknown be revealed. Maybe there is a deeper reference here that in the wake of these extraordinary happenings will come a general spiritual awakening, as if God had revealed to the earth itself.

***b* (8)** People will be shown their works in the Resurrection by being made to taste of their fruits, but they can also see the good or evil of their works in this life. Good and evil, when practised on a large scale, bring their reward or requital in this life as well. Note that the words here are *whoever does*, and thus include both the Muslim and the non-Muslim. Even a non-Muslim who does an atom's weight of good will have its reward, and a Muslim who does an atom's weight of evil will be requited for it.

Chapter 100

Al-ʿĀdiyāt The Assaulters

This chapter receives its title from the prophetic mention of *The Assaulters* in the first verse, showing that some of the great disasters spoken of in the last chapter were to be brought about by means of war. This proved true not only in the time of the Holy Prophet but in modern times too the unprecedented wars may be a precursor of a great spiritual awakening, as they were in Arabia of his time. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By those running and uttering cries! **2**And those producing fire, striking! **3**And those suddenly attacking at dawn! — **4**then thereby they raise dust, **5**then penetrate thereby gatherings — **6**Surely man is ungrateful to his Lord.[a] **7**And surely he is a witness of that. **8**And truly on account of the love of wealth he is miserly. **9**Does he not know (that) when those in the graves are raised, **10**and what is in the hearts is made manifest, **11**surely their Lord this day is Aware of them?[b]

***a* (6)** The majority of the commentators interpret verses 1–5 as applying to horses, in reference to the part they play in war. In this case it would be a prophetical description of the wars through which the opponents, who wanted to destroy Truth by the sword, were ultimately to be brought low. The words are so wide that they may also apply to modern means of warfare, particularly air attacks. Others understand that these are groups of spiritual wayfarers, who run fast in the way of God. Man's ungratefulness to his Lord and his excessive love of wealth is the real theme in all cases. He sees only the material side of life and does not pay heed to its spiritual values. The balance of life is thus upset. Disasters come and he is violently shaken so that his eyes may be opened to the real values of life.

***b* (11)** A day will come, we are told, when those in the graves — the dead — will be raised to life and what is hidden in the hearts — the deeds which man did, hiding them from the eyes of others — will be made manifest. God is Aware even now, but as in nature, the consequences are made manifest in due time. They may not be as clear here as they will be at the Resurrection, when the sight will be sharpened (50:22), but sometimes they are made manifest here, too.

Chapter 101

Al-Qāri'ah The Calamity

The repelling *Calamity* of this chapter, which gives it its title, is the same as the shaking of ch. 99. The date of revelation is also about the same.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 The calamity! **2**What is the calamity? **3**And what will make *y*ou know how terrible is the calamity?[a] **4**The day when people will be as scattered moths, **5**and the mountains will be as flakes of wool.[b] **6**Then as for him whose good deeds are heavy, **7**he will live a pleasant life. **8**And as for him whose good deeds are light, **9**the abyss is a mother to him.[c] **10**And what will make *y*ou know what that is? **11**A burning Fire.

***a* (3)** *Al-Qāri'ah* signifies *a very great calamity*, and the word occurs without *al* ("the") in 13:31: "And as for those who disbelieve, disaster (*qāri'ah*) will not cease to afflict them … until the promise of Allah come to pass." This shows that the word signifies one of those great calamities which befell the Quraish from time to time, and *al* is added to indicate that it is the *promised* calamity. In 69:4, *al-qāri'ah* signifies the great calamity which destroys a nation, i.e., their doom. *Al-qāri'ah* is also a name of the day of Resurrection or of the great Calamity which will destroy this earth, after which comes the Resurrection.

***b* (5)** This description may also apply to the doom of the opponents of Truth.

***c* (9)** A place of habitation or abode is also called *umm* ("mother"), because it grants protection to a person, as does the mother to a babe. The abyss, or hell, is here called a mother to indicate that man's connection with hell is similar to that of a baby with its mother, namely, that his abode there fits him for progress in the spiritual world — he being brought up, as it were, in the bosom of hell, as a child is brought up in the bosom of its mother, and that his stay in hell is only for a time, as the child draws nourishment from his mother only for a time.

Chapter 102

Al-Takāthur

The Abundance of Wealth

This chapter, which takes its title from the word *Abundance* in the first verse, stresses that vying with one another for wealth keeps people away from the real aim of life, and to make them realize that disasters are brought upon them to divest them of material comforts. Thus the subject-matter is connected with the previous chapters. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Abundance diverts you, **2**until you come to the graves.[a] **3**No indeed, you will soon know; **4**again, no indeed, you will soon know! **5**No indeed, if only you knew with a certain knowledge![b] **6**You will certainly see hell; **7**then you will see it with certainty of sight; **8**then on that day you shall certainly be questioned about the blessings (that you wasted).[c]

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a **(2)** *Coming to the graves* stands for *death*. The significance therefore is that vying with one another in increase of wealth diverts a man from the real object of life until he meets death.

b **(5)** When a person dies, he then comes to know that the acquisition of wealth was in no way the real object of his life. But if he had proceeded on the basis of certain knowledge, he could have seen this in this very life.

c **(8)** Verses 5–8 are considered as disclosing three degrees of certainty — *certainty by inference, certainty by sight* and *certainty by realization*. A person can by inference attain to a certainty of the existence of hell in this very life (verses 5 and 6); after his death he will see hell with his own eyes (v. 7); but a perfect manifestation of it will be realized by him on the day of Resurrection (v. 8). *Being questioned about the blessings* implies *tasting of the punishment* for failing to make right use of what was granted to man. But the words may also be taken as applying to this life. By pondering on the very nature of evil a man can become certain of hell, this being the certainty by inference. Then he can acquire a certain knowledge by sight, by seeing the fate of others. Lastly, he is made to realize it by disasters being brought upon himself.

Chapter 103

Al-‘Aṣr Time

As compared to those spoken of in the last chapter, this chapter draws attention to the testimony of *Time* in showing that those alone prosper who accept the Truth and exhort others to it. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 By the time! — **2**Surely man is in loss, **3**except those who believe and do good, and exhort one another to Truth, and exhort one another to patience.[a]

***a* (3)** The testimony of time is threefold: the flight of time affords the testimony that it is only those who do not waste the opportunity of doing good that reap the benefit; the light which shines along the path of bygone ages shows us that those who did good and enjoined good on others prospered, while the evil-doers were brought to naught; lastly, the time of the Holy Prophet afforded the clearest and most conclusive evidence that the believers and doers of good were successful, while their opponents sustained evident loss.

‘Aṣr signifies *time* or *succession of ages*. Some, however, understand by *al-‘aṣr* the time of the Holy Prophet. In fact, both significances hold good. While taking time in a general sense, it is true that every person who is not engaged in doing some permanent and lasting good is really losing every minute that passes away; the time of the Holy Prophet in which a great spiritual resurrection was brought about affords the clearest evidence that those who did not respond to the Prophet’s call were the losers, while the faithful brought about a revolution in the whole world by exhorting goodness and patience on others. The enjoining of patience on each other follows the direction to enjoin Truth, because the preaching of Truth brings man face to face with difficulties, and unless he is patient and forbearing under hardships, he cannot adhere to the Truth.

Chapter 104

Al-Humazah The Slanderer

As opposed to those spoken of in the last chapter, we have here a description of those whose aim is to amass wealth instead of doing good and who slander others instead of enjoining truth; hence the title *The Slanderer* from the first verse. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Woe to every slanderer, defamer,[a] **2**who amasses wealth and counts it[b] — **3**he thinks that his wealth will make him abide (forever).[c] **4**No indeed! He will certainly be hurled into the crushing disaster;[d] **5**and what will make *y*ou realize what the crushing disaster is? **6**It is the Fire kindled by Allah, **7**which rises over the hearts.[e] **8**Surely it is closed in on them, **9**in extended columns.[f]

***a* (1)** The slanderers and defamers are condemned here generally, with particular reference to the opponents who started their persecution of the Holy Prophet by bitterly slandering and defaming him, so that the pilgrims coming to Makkah from afar should not listen to his teachings. Just as goodness and patience are combined in the previous chapter as the two qualities which are the foundations on which human character should be built, the amassing of wealth and defaming are combined here as the two evils which lead ultimately to disaster.

***b* (2)** It is a succinct but exact picture of the material civilization of our day.

***c* (3)** By *abiding* is meant *abiding in prosperity*, or *lasting forever*.

***d* (4)** The name *Al-huṭamah* ("crushing disaster") is applied to *hell*, because it crushes everything that is cast into it. It includes both hell and other disasters which, it is prophesied, would crush the wealthy defamers of the Truth, their punishment being called by this name because they wanted to *crush* the Truth.

***e* (7)** The Fire of hell is described as *rising over the hearts*, showing that it is within the heart of man that the origin of hell-fire lies. A man's hell is thus within his own heart in this life.

***f* (9)** It is inordinate desires *extending* beyond all limits that give rise to *extended* columns of fire. Spiritually they may be witnessed in this life, but they assume a palpable shape in the next.

Chapter 105

Al-Fīl The Elephant

This chapter is entitled *The Elephant* due to the presence of one or more elephants in the army of the King of Yaman which invaded Makkah, in the year of the birth of the Holy Prophet, with the object of destroying the Ka‘bah. The army met with a crushing disaster, of the kind mentioned in the last chapter. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Have *y*ou not seen how *y*our Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant?[a] **2**Did He not cause their war to end in confusion? **3**And send against them birds in flocks, **4**casting at them decreed stones? **5**So He rendered them like straw eaten up.[b]

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a **(1)** The reference is to the memorable invasion of Makkah by Abrahah, the Christian governor in Yaman of the King of Abyssinia. Abrahah’s object was to destroy the Ka‘bah so as to divert Arab religious enthusiasm and Arab trade to Sana, where he had built a magnificent cathedral for the purpose. This army is known in Arabia as the *aṣḥāb al-Fīl*, or *the possessors of the Elephant*, because of the presence in it of one or more elephants. The year in which the invasion took place is known as the year of the Elephant, being 570 C.E., the year also of the Holy Prophet’s birth. Unable to defend the Holy House against the huge army, Abdul Muttalib, the Holy Prophet’s grandfather, thus prayed aloud, leaning upon the door of the Ka‘bah: “Defend, O Lord, Your own House, and let not the Cross to triumph over the Ka‘bah.” Then the whole population of Makkah took to the hills around the Holy City. Meanwhile a virulent form of smallpox, or some other pestilence, broke out in Abrahah’s army with such severity that the army retreated in confusion and dismay, many of them, being unable to find their way back, perishing in the valleys, while a part was swept away by floods.

There seems to be also an allusion to the circumstance that, in protecting the Ka‘bah against an enemy, though idols were worshipped there at the time, Almighty God had shown a purpose in its preservation. The coincidence of this year with the year of the Holy Prophet’s birth no doubt furnishes the key to that purpose, because the Arabs not only knew that the Sacred House had Abraham’s blessing, but also that Abraham had prayed for the appearance of a prophet from among them who should purify the House. The mention of the incident thus conveyed a warning to the Quraish that, if the Lord had destroyed an army on account of its intention to demolish His Sacred House, would He leave those alone who wanted to destroy His Prophet?

b **(5)** There is no authentic hadith as to how Abrahah's army was destroyed. There are reports that everyone at whom a stone was flung was affected with smallpox. Thus it was a virulent smallpox that broke out in the invading army while yet a little distance from Makkah, and the result was that Abrahah himself being affected with the pestilence, the whole army fled in a state of confusion, leaving the corpses of the dead for the birds to feast on. The words of v. 4 may mean *the birds cast at them stones* or *flung them against stones*, the reference in the latter case being to the birds tearing off flesh from their bodies. For birds as indicating the destruction of an enemy, see 16:79 footnote.

Chapter 106

Al-Quraish The Quraish

This chapter continues the subject-matter of the last, reminding the Quraish of the great benefits conferred on them because of their guardianship of the Ka'bah. The date of revelation is also the same.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 For the protection of the Quraish [a] — **2**their protection during their journey in the winter and the summer.[b] **3**So let them serve the Lord of this House, **4**Who feeds them against hunger, and gives them security against fear.[c]

***a* (1)** The Quraish, the tribe to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged, were settled at Makkah and had charge of the Sacred House, to which pilgrims resorted from all parts of Arabia, and therefore, being guardians of the Holy House, they enjoyed special honour among the tribes of Arabia. Moreover Makkah had thus become the centre of Arabia, bringing prosperity to the Quraish.

Verse 1 is connected with the last chapter, the significance being that the Divine protection of the Ka'bah and the destruction of its enemies was a special favour granted to the Quraish, for it led to their protection. Being guardians of the Ka'bah, they were respected when they set out on their journeys, while within the sacred territory they enjoyed an unparalleled security.

***b* (2)** The protection mentioned in the last note was of special use to them in their journeys northward to Syria and southward to Yaman, the former of which was undertaken in the summer and the latter in winter, to carry on their trade.

***c* (4)** Feeding against hunger and granting security against fear were the two special favours conferred on the Quraish through the sacredness of the Ka'bah, because the pilgrimage gave a special impetus to their trade and the necessaries of life were brought to their very doors, while they were totally secure from all fear of attack, to which the other Arab tribes were constantly exposed.

Chapter 107

Al-Mā'ūn Acts of Kindness

This chapter gives expression to the prominence which Islam accords to helping the needy and the poor. Those who neglect this are described as denying religion. Prayer is a mere show if it does not generate feelings of love and sympathy for humanity. Hence its title *Acts of Kindness* occurring in the last verse. It is one of the very early revelations at Makkah.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Have *y*ou seen him who denies religion? **2**That is the one who is rough to the orphan, **3**and does not urge the feeding of the needy.[a]

4 So woe to the praying ones, **5**who are unmindful of their prayer,[b] **6**who do (good) to be seen, **7**and refrain from acts of kindness![c]

***a* (3)** The word *dīn* in v. 1 is generally taken here as meaning *judgment*, but its more well-known significance, *religion,* is preferable. Not taking care of orphans and helping the needy is really a denial of religion. Verses 4–7 make it clear that praying to God is useless, a mere show, unless one is kind to orphans and helps the needy.

***b* (5)** Being *unmindful* of prayer means not paying heed to the *spirit* of prayer, which is described in verses 2 and 3 as being the help of the orphan and the needy.

***c* (7)** *Al-Mā'ūn* is explained by Bukhari as meaning *every good* or *kind deed*. And it is added that its highest form is the obligatory *zakāt* and the lowest is the lending of a thing or giving any useful thing to another (Bukhari, book 65: *Surah* 107). It includes all acts of kindness done to others.

Chapter 108

Al-Kauthar The Abundance of Good

The *abundance* of wealth spoken of in ch. 102 leads man astray from the real purpose of life. This chapter deals with the *Abundance of Good* and the means to attain it. Those means are: prayer to God, which fills one with the noblest aspirations, and sacrifice, which means devoting one's life to the service of humanity. It is one of the earliest revelations at Makkah.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Surely We have given *y*ou abundance of good.[a] **2**So pray to *y*our Lord and sacrifice.[b] **3**Surely *y*our enemy is cut off (from good).[c]

***a* (1)** *Al-kauthar* means *the abundance* or *the abundance of good*. Here it means *the abundance of good* which God gave the Holy Prophet — he was promised the triumph of Islam over all religions, and granted help against his enemies and intercession for his community. In fact, he was granted so much of goodness of all kinds that it cannot be counted. From what is stated further on, it is clear that it is not the Holy Prophet alone who is promised this abundance of good but also every true follower of his who makes use of the means for the attainment of it, as described in the next verse.

***b* (2)** Two ways to attain the abundance of good promised in v. 1 are: praying to God, and *naḥr* or *sacrifice*, which means the devoting of one's life to the good of humanity. Prayer is communion with God which raises in a person's heart the highest aspirations and makes him drink deep at the fountain of Divine morals. If there is no aspiration for good, it is simply impossible to do good; hence prayer is mentioned first. And when these noble aspirations arise, man is told, if need be, to lay down his very life for the service of humanity, not of one group or one nation or one community. Although *naḥr* stands for sacrificing an animal, the sacrifice of an animal itself stands for sacrifice of self (see 22:34).

***c* (3)** The word *abtar* (cut off) conveys several significances. For instance, *in want* or *poor, suffering loss, one from whom all good is cut off, having no offspring or progeny*. All good is cut off from him because he walks contrary to the ways in which good can be attained. (*Editor's Note:* This verse also refuted the allegation of the opponents that, as the Holy Prophet had no male offspring, his name and mission would come to an end after him. This verse contains a prophecy that it is his enemies who would be cut off and leave no successors to continue their name or work.)

Chapter 109

Al-Kāfirūn The Disbelievers

The Disbelievers — hence the title — are told in this chapter that they shall be recompensed for their misdeeds, while the Holy Prophet and the faithful will reap the reward of their deeds. It belongs to the early period at Makkah.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Say: O disbelievers, **2**I do not serve what you serve, **3**nor do you serve Him Whom I serve, **4**nor shall I serve what you serve, **5**nor do you serve Him Whom I serve. **6**For you is your recompense and for me my recompense.[a]

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a **(6)** Among the various significances of the word *dīn* is *recompense* or *reward*, and this is what is meant here, rather than *religion*. It is a prophecy that those who serve Allah will have a goodly reward from Him, while those who serve idols will not obtain any help from their false gods. The next chapter refers to the reward of the truthful, Divine help and victory, and people entering into Islam in companies, while the one following it shows that the recompense of the idol-worshippers is that their wealth and all their efforts will be entirely unavailing.

Those who think that these words indicate that the Holy Prophet had despaired of the disbelievers are mistaken. Not for a single moment did he cease to invite the disbelievers to accept Islam and to forsake the worship of idols.

Chapter 110

Al-Naṣr The Help

This chapter speaks of the great Divine *Help* and victory, mentioned in the first verse, which the Holy Prophet received in the cause of Truth. It is reported that this chapter was revealed during the last pilgrimage of the Holy Prophet and that he lived only eighty days after its revelation. Being revealed at Makkah during the Madinah period, it showed how those wonderful prophecies announced when the Holy Prophet was alone and helpless were now fulfilled by his visiting Makkah with the whole of Arabia accepting him.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 When Allah's help and victory comes,[a] **2**and *y*ou see people entering the religion of Allah in companies, **3**celebrate the praise of *y*our Lord and ask His protection.[b] Surely He is ever Returning (to mercy).

***a* (1)** The great victory which had come was the triumph of the religion of Islam in the whole of Arabia. Deputation after deputation from all parts of Arabia came to Madinah and accepted Islam. History does not present another example of the wonderful transformation wrought by the Holy Prophet within the short space of twenty years.

***b* (3)** On witnessing the greatest triumph known to history, the Holy Prophet is told to celebrate the praise of his Lord, and to ask protection. For whom was protection to be asked? If it was for himself, it was a protection against elation at an unprecedented victory, because elation ill befitted a Teacher of righteousness. But more likely, he was required to ask protection for the masses which were now accepting Islam in companies. In fact, he was required to ask Divine forgiveness or protection for his erstwhile oppressors, forgiveness for his deadly enemies, who were guilty of the gravest crimes.

Chapter 111

Al-Lahab The Flame

This chapter is entitled *Lahab* in reference to the fact that it shows that the opponents of Truth led their lives in heart-burning, or it may refer to the name of the Holy Prophet's uncle, Abdul Uzza, who was bitterly opposed to him, Abu Lahab being a title given to him, which occurs in the first verse. The chapter thus deals with the end of opposition to Truth. It is a revelation of the early period at Makkah.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Abu Lahab's hands will perish and he will perish.[a] **2**His wealth and what he earns will not avail him. **3**He will burn in fire giving rise to flames.[b] **4**And his wife — the bearer of slander;[c] **5**upon her neck a halter of twisted rope![d]

***a* (1)** A man of a fiery temper may be called *abū-lahab* or *father of flame*. Abdul Uzza, a paternal uncle of the Holy Prophet, was known by this name, because of his ruddy complexion or his fiery temper. It is related that he followed the Prophet when he went out to preach, saying to people that the Prophet was a mad relative of his. *His hands will perish* means that all that he did in opposition to the Prophet will end in naught. It is said that he himself will perish. He is reported to have died seven days after hearing of the defeat of the Quraish at Badr.

***b* (3)** He burned in fire in this very life because his life was a life of heart-burning, on account of his failure to check the advance of Truth. This fire gave rise to flames which burned others as well, including his own wife, who is spoken of in v. 4. There is also a reference to the palpable shape which this fire will take in the Hereafter.

***c* (4)** The flames that sprang from the fire in which Abu Lahab lived enveloped his own wife, so that she also took part in the opposition to the Prophet. Her part in opposition is here described as being *ḥammālat al-ḥaṭab*, generally translated as *bearer of fuel*. It is thought that this refers to the thorny bushes which she brought from the wood to spread in the Prophet's way. But the words also mean *bearer of slander*, as she used to spread false reports against the Prophet (Bukhari, book 65: *Surah* 111, ch. 4).

***d* (5)** She is said to have died by being strangled by the very rope in which she used to bring thorns. It is related that she was a wealthy woman who possessed a necklace of jewellery. Maybe the twisted rope is a reference to her jewellery, as a jewelled necklace is as worthless in the eye of God as a rope.

Chapter 112

Al-Ikhlās The Unity

This is really the concluding chapter of the Holy Quran, the two following chapters only showing how the protection of the Lord is to be sought. It gives the sum and substance of the teachings of the Quran, which is the declaration of the *Unity* of God. *Ikhlās* means purification from dross and this chapter is so-called because it purifies the Unity of God of all dross of polytheism. It is one of the earliest revelations.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Say: He, Allah, is One. **2**Allah is He on Whom all depend. **3**He has no offspring, nor is He born (of anyone); **4**and none is like Him.[a]

***a* (4)** This, a very early revelation, points out the fundamental errors of many religions, including Christianity, in its four short sentences. The first verse proclaims the absolute Unity of the Divine Being, and deals a deathblow to all forms of polytheism, including the doctrine of the Trinity.

In v. 2 Allah is said to be *Ṣamad*, which the Holy Prophet is reported to have explained as meaning *the Lord to Whom recourse is had in every need*, so that all have need of Him and He has need of none. This statement negatives the doctrine according to which soul and matter are co-eternal with God and God stands in need of them to bring about creation. The doctrine prevails in India, and could not have been known to the Holy Prophet.

V. 3 points out the error of those religions which describe God as being father or son, such as the Christian religion.

V. 4 negatives such doctrines as the doctrine of incarnation, according to which a mere human being is likened to God.

Thus four kinds of corruption of the belief in the oneness of God are rejected here: a belief in the plurality of gods (v. 1), a belief that other things possess the perfect attributes of the Divine Being (v. 2), a belief that God is either a father or a son (v. 3), and a belief that others can do that which is ascribable only to God (v. 4).

Chapter 113

Al-Falaq The Dawn

This chapter and the following one teach how to seek refuge in God and ask for His protection. Both these chapters were revealed most probably in the early period at Makkah. It is called *The Dawn* from the word occurring in the first verse, showing that Truth would ultimately dispel all darkness.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the dawn,[a] **2**from the evil of what He has created,[b] **3**and from the evil of intense darkness,[c] when it comes, **4**and from the evil of those who cast (evil suggestions) in firm resolutions,[d] **5**and from the evil of the envier when he envies.[e]

***a* (1)** The reference in the *Lord of the dawn* is to the gradual manifestation of the Truth and its ultimate triumph.

***b* (2)** *Editor's Note:* Anything which God has created can cause harm if it is used in an incorrect way, without the light of knowledge.

***c* (3)** This signifies darkness in which there is no ray of light, and stands for the dark difficulties with which an affair is sometimes attended — difficulties through which a person is unable to see his way. Man is, therefore, here taught to pray that his affairs may not be enveloped in utter darkness.

***d* (4)** These words indicate those who put evil suggestions into the resolution of people or into the management of their affairs. This verse deals with the second difficulty in the management of an affair. The first difficulty is its being enveloped in utter gloom (v. 3); the second is that darkness is dispelled, but the resolution to accomplish the affair is yet weak. (*Editor's Note:* The view that this verse refers to witches, who had once cast a spell on the Holy Prophet by "blowing on knots", is entirely baseless and contrary to the teachings of the Quran.)

***e* (5)** This is the third difficulty. Success is now in sight, but there are those who envy that success. Therefore, Divine protection has still to be sought when a person is successful in accomplishing an affair.

Note that the Prophet, who was charged with the heavy task of establishing truth in the world and making it triumphant over falsehood, had to face all these difficulties, and his faithful followers, whose goal of life is the same as that of the Prophet, stand most in need of resorting to this prayer with which the Quran draws to a close.

Chapter 114

Al-Nās Mankind

See the introductory note on the last chapter. The name of this chapter is taken from the word occurring in it describing God as the Lord, King and God of *mankind,* meaning that He is their Nourisher to perfection, Controller of their affairs and Controller of their hearts.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, **2**the King of mankind, **3**the God of mankind, **4**from the evil of the whisperings of the sneaking (devil), **5**who whispers into the hearts of people, **6**(and is) from among the jinn and mankind.[a]

***a* (6)** These verses are a complement to the previous chapter. Three kinds of mischief are pointed out there which may be done to the cause of Truth. Here a fourth, but the gravest mischief of all, is pointed out, that of the *sneaking devil*, who comes stealthily and casts evil suggestions into the hearts of people. The whispering of the evil one is the greatest mischief because its source is *in the hearts of people* (v. 5). *Al-khannās* (v. 4) is *the devil* because he retires or shrinks or hides himself.

Man is here taught to seek refuge in God Who is, in the first place, the *Rabb* of mankind, i.e., its Nourisher by degrees to Perfection; secondly, He is the *Malik* or *King of mankind,* i.e., holds control over them, so far as the physical laws of nature are concerned; thirdly, He is the *Ilāh* of mankind, Who alone deserves to be worshipped and before Whom the whole of mankind must ultimately bow. In other words, the protection of God is sought because He is the Nourisher Who brings to perfection, and He holds control over matter as well as mind. The Divine purpose is thus again disclosed at the end, as it is disclosed in the very beginning (1:1) of the Holy Quran. It is to bring mankind to perfection. Nothing in this world can frustrate this purpose, as God holds control over matter as well as mind.

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Explanation: A verse or group of verses is indicated by the chapter number, followed by a colon, and then the verse number or numbers. A footnote to a verse is indicated by placing *n* after the verse. If a verse has more than one footnote, a figure is added after *n,* for example, *n*-1 or *n*-2, to identify the specific footnote. A slash before *n* (as in 2:260/*n*) indicates that both the verse (2:260) *and* the footnote (2:260*n*) should be consulted. The introductory note to a chapter is indicated by a reference such as "ch. 19 intro."

Aaron, Moses' request for help of, 20:29–34, 26:13, 28:34; is made a prophet, 4:163, 6:84, 10:75, 19:53, 21:48, 23:45, 25:35; leader of Israelites in Moses' absence, 7:142; not guilty of making the calf, 2:51*n*, 7:150, 151*n,* 20:85*n*, 90*n*, 20:95

Abbreviations, 2:1*n*, 68:1*n*

Abdul Muttalib, the Prophet's grandfather, 93:6*n*; prayer of, 105:1*n*

Abdullah, the Prophet's father, 93:6*n*

Abel, 5:27*n*

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Transliterated Forms

Listed below are words in their full transliteration which are not fully transliterated in this book:

‘Abbās
‘Abdullāh
‘Abdul Muṭṭalib
Abū …
Abū Dāwūd
Abū Ṣufyān
Abū Ṭālib
‘Ād
Aḥmad
‘Ā’ishah
‘Alī
Allāh
Asmā’
Banī Naḍīr
Banī Quraiẓah
Barzakh
(Ṣaḥīḥ) Bukhārī
Dhu …
Ḥadīth
Ḥajj
Ḥudaibiyah
Ḥunain
Ibn Mājah
Islām
Jihād
Khadījah
Khaulah
Madīnah
Miṣtaḥ
Muḥammad
Najrān
Quraish
Qur’ān
Ramaḍān
Saba’
Sa‘d ibn Mu‘ādh
Ṣafā
Ṣafwān
Ṣaḥīḥ
Ṣāliḥ
Ṣāmirī
Ṣan‘ā
Shu‘aib
Ṭā’if
Thamūd
Thaur
Tirmidhī
Uḥud
‘Umar
‘Uthmān
‘Uzzā
Yathrib
Zaid ibn Thābit

Appendix:
Revisions in this Edition

As stated in the Preface, more details are provided here of the nature of the changes made in the 2010 revised edition to update the language of the translation of Maulana Muhammad Ali in the last, 1951, edition of his acclaimed work.

The most noticeable change is the replacement of the second person singular forms, 'thou', 'thee', 'thy', etc., by 'you' and 'your'. In fact, in the Preface to his first edition published in 1917, the Maulana wrote: "I have, however, given up the antiquated *thou* (except when the Divine Being is addressed)." In that edition he added a marginal column on the left of the translation, in which he indicated whether 'you' in the line of text opposite was the singular 'thou'. In his revised 1951 edition, he removed this margin as unnecessary and used the 'thou' forms within the translation itself. I have reverted to the usage of the 1917 edition, but have employed the convention that, whenever 'you' is in the singular, the letter *y* is printed in italics as in: *y*ou, *y*our. When God is addressed, which is always in the singular in the Quran, I have also used "You", with capital "Y", instead of "Thou" and "Thee".

The next most prominent change is also a reversion to the first edition, and that is in the use of the negative. In the revised 1951 edition the Maulana has used constructions such as "you know not", "they see not", etc. I have restored the style of his 1917 edition in which these are of the form: "you do not know", "they do not see", etc.

I will illustrate other changes by giving examples. The Maulana has used the words *aught* and *naught* in many places in the translation, but in other places he has translated exactly the same Arabic text using *anything, nothing, in the least* and *at all*. The particle *bal* is usually translated by him as *nay,* but in some places

it is translated as *rather, but* or *yet.* In some places the more traditional *that which* (as in *that which Allah has revealed*) has been used by him but in others the simpler *what* (as in *what Allah has revealed*). The word translated as *iniquitous* is often also rendered by him as *unjust* or *wrongdoer,* the word translated as *tarry* is sometimes *remain* or *stay,* and *hosts* is sometimes *forces* or *army*. In each of these and similar cases I have used the latter words, which are more common, to replace the former, less familiar ones.

The Arabic preposition *min* is often used to indicate that a person belongs to a certain group, as for example in the translation: "if he is of (*min*) the truthful" (12:27, 12:51), "he is of (*min*) the liars" (12:26), or "if thou art of (*min*) the truthful" (26:31). The same kind of expression is elsewhere translated by the Maulana more simply as in the examples: "if thou art truthful" (26:154, 26:187), "I think him a liar" (28:38). I have substituted the latter style for the former, except if the change would not suit the context. Another type of similar instance is as in constructions such as "of them is he (*min-hum man*) who believes … and of them is he who turns away" (4:55). Elsewhere he uses the construction: "some of them believed and some of them denied" (2:253). Again, I have replaced the former by the latter.

I have also tried, as far as possible, to make the translation of the same phrase consistent in all its occurrences by using one of the wordings employed for it by the Maulana, if he had used different wording in different places. However, in certain places this has not been done because there was a clear reason for the difference, such as better suiting the context.

In some of those cases in which it was necessary to revise a word or phrase, I could not find a suitable alternative used elsewhere by the Maulana. In those instances, I have used my own judgment to make the revision while restricting myself to the Maulana's style and language as far as possible.

In this book I cannot list and explain every type of revision. Anyone interested in knowing the reason for any particular changes that are not explained here should contact me.

I cannot come to a close without a mention of my association with the Maulana Muhammad Ali's own publication which I have edited to produce the present work. It was in 1978 that I first carried

out a detailed, close reading of the latest reprint of his 1951 edition of the English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran in order to identify typographical errors and inconsistencies in preparation for the next reprint. The list of corrections and other suggestions that I thus compiled was gone through in detail in Lahore, Pakistan, by Mr N.A. Faruqui and Mr Muhammad Ahmad, son of Maulana Muhammad Ali. In 1981 Mr Faruqui referred to this in his obituary of Muhammad Ahmad as follows:

> "Muhammad Ahmad's work in the revision of the seventh edition of the English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran, now under print, was equally painstaking. For that revision, the original spadework done by Dr. Zahid Aziz was the most thorough job I have ever seen. But to collate and give final shape to the suggestions made by Dr. Zahid Aziz and several others, Muhammad Ahmad spent long evenings with me after his office hours." [1]

In 1990 it was proposed to re-typeset the entire work. I made detailed suggestions for a new, improved design and layout which were carefully scrutinised by the Head of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore, Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, the Vice-President, Mr N.A. Faruqui, and other senior members of the Anjuman. The new edition incorporating these suggestions was published in the USA in 2002. I was in charge of the proofreading of the newly composed text. The index in that edition was also enlarged by me by about fifty percent from the previous one by Maulana Muhammad Ali. This background has been indicated in the Foreword by Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan and Mr Faruqui, and in the Publisher's Note written by me, in that edition.[2]

I have outlined this history in order to show that my previous experience equipped me somewhat, and inspired me, to carry out the present revision.

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1. *The Light,* English organ of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore, 8 March 1981, p. 8.

2. The year 2002 edition is published by the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc. USA, Dublin, Ohio, USA.

About Maulana Muhammad Ali

Maulana Muhammad Ali (d. 1951, Pakistan) is the world-famous author of several highly-acclaimed books on Islam, including his English translation of the Holy Quran with detailed commentary.

Born in 1874 in the Punjab (India), Maulana Muhammad Ali had a distinguished educational record, obtaining excellent degrees in English and Law by the year 1899. Through his interest in religion, he joined the Ahmadiyya Movement in 1897. As he was about to embark on a lucrative career in law, he was called upon by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), to devote his life for the service of Islam. He forthwith went to join the Founder in his native village of Qadian and began his literary work under the Founder's guidance. He was appointed the first editor of the *Review of Religions,* an English monthly, which was started by the Founder to present the true picture of Islam to the English-reading public all over the world. During this period, in 1909, he began work on his translation of the Quran, which was published in 1917.

In 1914, when an internal danger arose within the Ahmadiyya Movement attempting to alter its true character and beliefs, Maulana Muhammad Ali left Qadian and, along with other leading figures in the Movement, founded the *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam* in Lahore (then in British India, later Pakistan). This was a Muslim missionary and literary organisation established to preserve the real mission, beliefs and ideals of the Founder of the Movement.

From then till his death in 1951, Maulana Muhammad Ali led this Association, directed its missionary activities, and produced a vast amount of invaluable, scholarly literature on Islam. His books have influenced millions of people all over the world towards a favourable view of Islam, and have earned the highest tributes. His last work was a thorough revision of his translation and commentary of the Quran in the late 1940s, the revised edition being first published in 1951.

See a list of his major books given on the next page.

Other major books by Maulana Muhammad Ali

The Religion of Islam
Comprehensive work on sources, principles and practices of Islam

A Manual of Hadith
Reports of the sayings and acts of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, Arabic text, English translation, explanatory notes

Muhammad The Prophet
Biography of the Prophet Muhammad

Living Thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad
Brief life of the Holy Prophet and his enlightening teachings

The Early Caliphate
History of early Islam under the first four Caliphs

The New World Order
Islam's solutions to modern world problems

Bayan-ul-Quran (Urdu)
Urdu translation of the Holy Quran with voluminous commentary

Fadl-ul-Bari (Urdu)
Urdu translation of *Sahih al-Bukhari* with detailed commentary

Al-Nubuwwat fil-Islam (Urdu)
Unique work in history of Islam on the finality of prophethood

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement
Life of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad by Maulana Muhammad Ali, edited and enlarged by Zahid Aziz

Maulana Muhammad Ali's English translation of the Quran was the *first English translation by a Muslim* to be available generally, and the first Muslim translation published in the West, in 1917.

It included a comprehensive commentary: discussing meanings of Arabic words, reviewing earlier interpretations, citing authorities wherever he differed with previous views, removing misconceptions about Islam and refuting objections raised by Western criticism.

Later Muslim translators, such as Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, and Muhammad Asad, benefitted greatly from this pioneering work. "Pickthall's work is not very much more than a revision of the Ahmadiyya [M. Ali] version" — *The Muslim World,* July 1931.

Some of its many reviews:

> "To deny the excellence of Maulvi Muhammad Ali's translation, the influence it has exercised and its proselytising utility would be to deny the light of the sun." — Abdul Majid Daryabadi, in *Such,* Lucknow, India, 1934.
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> "Among human productions of literary masterpieces, the English translation of the Holy Book by Maulvi Muhammad Ali undoubtedly claims a position of distinction and pre-eminence." — *United India and Indian States,* 1929.
>
> "… few translations into English have reached such a high standard." — *Madras Mail,* 1929.
>
> "[I] greatly admire the general arrangement. As for the English rendering, I am impressed … with the simplicity and precision and the adherence to the text which indicate the reverence due to God's own Word from a true believer." — Mohammad Ali Jauhar, Indian Muslim nationalist leader, 1918.
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> "Probably no man living has done longer or more valuable service for the cause of Islamic revival than Maulana Muhammad Ali of Lahore." — Marmaduke Pickthall, 1936, reviewing a later work by Maulana Muhammad Ali.

In the present edition, first published in 2010, and now in 2025, the Arabic text has not been included. The language of the translation has been updated where necessary, and the notes have been abridged and edited.